

# THE PENGUIN NEW WRITING

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Rosamond Lehmann	<i>Wonderful Holidays—IV</i>
C. V. Wedgwood	<i>Leaving Home</i>
Joseph Gurnard	<i>Killing Time</i>
William Sansom	<i>The Cliff</i>
William Plomer	<i>A Wedding Guest</i>



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B. J. Brooke, Dunstan Thompson, Hamish Henderson,  
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*From a Painter's Notebook—II*



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*Photogravure Illustrations*

EDITED BY  
**JOHN LEHMANN**

NUMBER 25



NINEPENCE

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THE PENGUIN  
NEW WRITING

Edited by  
JOHN LEHMANN

## ABOUT THE NEW CONTRIBUTORS

ROGER ANSCOMBE was born in Hertfordshire in 1913. He was educated at Summerhill School, and returned there as master in 1933. His first story appeared in *The Adelphi* in 1935. He gave up teaching with the intention of turning to journalism, but became a Merchant Navy Radio Officer in Spring, 1940.

ANTHONY THORNE has written several novels, but very few short stories. He became an Ordinary Seaman in 1940 and is still in the Navy.

DUNSTAN THOMPSON was born in Connecticut in 1918, the son of a Naval Officer, and has since lived around the world. He was three years at Harvard. In New York, together with Harry Brown, he edited *Vice Versa*, a magazine of poetry. His first book, *Poems*, was published by Simon and Schuster in the winter of 1943. He is now a Corporal in the American Army stationed in England.

R. H. MARTIN is a Private in the R.A.M.C. His age is 28, and he hopes to be a professional writer after the war.

J. G. MILLARD was born in 1911 in South Wales, educated at a local secondary school and Caerleon College. He became a schoolmaster in London, but was conscripted into the Army in 1940. He has served three and a half years in the Far East, chiefly in the Arakan with the Fourteenth Army. He has been a Staff Major since December, 1944.

RUPERT DOONE was the last solo dancer engaged by Diaghilev for his company. He was choreographer to Max Reinhardt in pre-Nazi Berlin. He started the Group Theatre in London, which was disbanded for the duration of the war. Since the war began, he has directed Morley College Theatre School (a drama school for working men and women).

K. B. POOLE was born in 1905 at Kingston, Surrey, and spent his early life in North London. In peace-time he works in the City, but his interests are music, botany and foreign languages. He is married and has one son. He has been serving with the Eighth Army.



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# THE PENGUIN NEW WRITING

*Edited by*  
JOHN LEHMANN

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## FOREWORD

IN my Foreword to No. 22 I spoke of *Penguin New Writing's* plans for peace, and, in the manner of planners, made some large and confident promises. Now that we have been living in the long dreamed-of post-war world for some months, our readers have a right to expect that some of those plans should already be materializing. So far, however, this has been a most uncomfortable kind of peace; some of the deep bruises that the war inflicted on our private nerves and our work-a-day social life have been coming to the surface, and with printing machines still waiting for printers, telephones preferring wrong numbers to right and unrepaired offices all Danaë to the storms, many of our plans have had to remain blue prints. We have not yet, for instance, been able to follow up the foretaste of regular colour illustrations which we offered in No. 23. We can only assure the more impatient of our readers that this will be coming soon, and perhaps with a more far-reaching fulfilment of our promises of improved get-up than they have expected. Meanwhile, they will find a re-arrangement of our contents, that will provide more poetry in every number instead of the occasional poetry supplements of the past, and at the same time more critical articles. Other changes will explain themselves in the light of changed times; and I would like to express my hope that some of the writers in uniform, whose prose we have had the pleasure of publishing in the now abolished feature 'Report on To-day,' will soon be returning home and able to devote themselves to the longer and more creative works their stories from the battlefields so tantalizingly promised.

JOHN LEHMANN

## NOTE ON THE CHANTICLEER THEATRE CLUB

*(See the photogravure inset)*

The Chanticleer Theatre Club, the first of the small theatrical ventures whose pioneering work Penguin New Writing proposes to illustrate regularly, was founded in the Spring of 1944. The aim of the director, Greta Douglas, has been to build up a group of actors known, like the 'Compagnie des Quinze,' rather by the quality and integrity of its work than by any star names. Their productions have ranged from Sir John Vanbrugh to Lenormand, and have included a season of Ibsen, two new plays, and a new translation of Euripides' 'The Trojan Women.'

## ANTHONY THORNE

### POTATOES HAVE HIPS OF THEIR OWN

WHEN something that has happened to a man goes on happening again and again in his mind, and is remembered and relived for more than a year, even for two or three years after it has happened, even for the space of a war, there is only one way to write of it. You must say that it is happening now, that it is still in the present. For that is how it feels.

The real present is not nearly so solid. As things come along you can stuff them into your pocket and forget them—months at sea in the Med., with sharp excitements and long boredoms, can be stuffed deep into your pocket, and two years in the Indian Ocean can go the same way ; but something small that happened as long ago as 1940 in an air-raid shelter can be too big for your pocket, and you must carry it about with you continually in your hands.

And so it is always 1940 for Pincher Martin the sailor, for he remembers the conversation he had with a South African, lying sixty feet underground on a sack of potatoes. The potatoes are there because the barracks keeps its invasion stores in a safe place. Pincher and the South African are lying on them because they came down too late for a bunk, a bench, or a few feet of concrete floor. Six thousand sailors have been swallowed by this enormous whale ; they lie staring up at its iron ribs in various stages of coma, waiting for the All Clear and sudden activity. Petty officers, who shouted them down here, will shout them up again. Meanwhile, they loll. From time to time a voice from the loud-speakers tells them that there is a dog-fight overhead, that a plane has been shot down, or that a bomb has just missed the Gunnery School (what a bit of rough !). They

hardly listen. Either they are trying to sleep or, which is always more difficult, trying to write home.

Of the two lying on the sack of potatoes one has a home and one hasn't. The dark South African, a young adventurer who drifted into the navy from a waterfront, has even in sleep a curious air of detachment and self-sufficiency. He is lonely and invulnerable. Whereas Pincher Martin, his bedfellow, has by contrast a pink, shining amiability and obviously belongs somewhere. Somebody must have claimed him; it could not be otherwise. He must have a wife and a sister or two and several mothers.

From time to time they turn and twist and fidget, practically unconscious of one another's presence, but more than conscious of the potatoes. 'I'd have rather slept on the ground,' thinks Pincher Martin, 'why blimey, I would and all, than on a sack of ruddy potatoes. You can make a hole for your hips, sleeping on the ground; you can sleep comfortable. But potatoes have hips of their own. Every single one of these bloody little potatoes, they've got hips.'

And over he flings with an involuntary kick on his neighbour's ankle. South Africa opens his eyes without stirring. And at that moment they both hear the voice of God.

'Leave,' says the voice, 'will be granted to the Red Watch from eighteen hundred to-day to o-eight-double-o on Monday.' And again 'Leave will be granted——'

But the repetition isn't needed; it's not even heard in the hubbub. Nothing short of Action Stations could have awakened sailors so quickly. From bunk, bench and floor they raise their startled heads. The Red Watch—it was the Red Watch, wasn't it? To-day? Eighteen hundred? Blimey, I needn't have written home—I shall be there! Perishing generous all of a sudden, aren't they? It's being as there are six bloody thousand of us in barracks, and they doesn't know



what to do. Well—lovely grub, all the same. Bake that pie, mother!

It's a 'Friday While' for the Red Watch—a sailor's week-end. The loud-speakers said so. They gape down at the sailors, and the sailors gape up at them. Especially those unfortunates of the Blue Watch or the White Watch—two-thirds of the air-raid shelter—who will not be entitled to the Friday While. That needs some taking in. A Friday While, and it isn't yours. It's for the Red Watch.

'Oh, Christ!' says Pincher Martin at last. 'Oh, Jesus!'

'Don't you kick me again,' says South Africa.

'Sorry, mate, it's them bloody potatoes. What watch are you?'

'Red.'

'Lucky bastard.'

'What's lucky about that?'

'Well, you've got a Friday While, haven't you? What more d'you want?'

'A home to go to.'

He says it without any expression.

Pincher turns slowly on to his stomach and stares for the first time at his bedfellow, a long, insolent lad with a skin like tropical fruit. One of these overseas matelots, one without a home, a loose-leg. You meet them now and again.

'I tell you what,' says Pincher with sudden animation, 'I'll give you five bob.'

'You will, will you?'

'Yes, five bob for your card. If you've got no home to go to, I have. I've not seen my wife for a twelve-month.'

'Didn't you get leave?'

'It weren't no good to me. I couldn't get home. Listen, this is my first chance.'

'Next week it'll be your turn. You'll get a Friday While, maybe.'

'Don't talk silly. There may be a bloody draft chit waiting for me—you know how it is now. Why, next week-end I may be back on Northern Patrol. Come on, mate. Five bob.'

'Nothing doing.'

Pincher looks at his mate a little more cautiously. So it's money, is it? Well, what's five bob, what's ten bob after all? A Friday While would be a stepping stone—yes, that's it, a stepping stone. He hadn't seen Eileen for a twelvemonth. Married to her for three weeks, three weeks in the little room, and then off to sea. You need a stepping stone, you need as many stepping stones as you can get, however small. Why, even if it rained the whole bloody time and he had a tiff with her and there was a blitz and the pub ran out of wallop—

'Seven and six.'

'I'm not trading.'

'Listen——'

'Let go my arm.'

'Listen, I'm telling you ten bob, and you're lucky. I want my Friday While. I need it, I've got to have it.'

'Well, now you listen. It's not your Friday While. It's mine. And I want it.'

'You? You told me you'd got no home to go to.'

'I haven't.'

'Then what the bloody hell d'you want it for?'

South Africa smiles. He turns on to his back and stretches easily, as though the potatoes did not worry him at all. His teeth are white and good and annoying. He knows that the man next to him is anxious; he cannot help knowing this, and he knows also that he has the power to torment him further, to play with him. But there is nothing cruel in South Africa: he says what he says for no other reason than that he is selfish, stubborn, content with his loneliness, original, and a little mad.

'I want to go to Scotland.'

‘Scotland? Why Scotland?’

‘I’ve never been there.’

‘Hell, there’s plenty of places you’ve never been.’

‘It’s a long way. I’ve got a railway warrant due to me. I might as well ask for a good one. Get all you can out of them, that’s what I say.’

‘So that’s it,’ says Pincher, turning to stare at him again. ‘You mean, dirty bastard. You’re going to Scotland. Because it’s a big railway journey. Because you’ve a free warrant due to you. And you want to make the most of it. And that’s all.’

‘Edinburgh, that’s where I’m going.’

‘My Christ, you’ll have a bloody awful journey. Hours and hours. You’ll be cold and browned off and perishing hungry. I hope you will.’

‘Met a nice fellow from Edinburgh once, name of MacLaren.’

‘Just because you want to get the most out of a free ruddy railway warrant.’

‘Or was it MacLellan?’

‘Why don’t you ask for Pincher Martins in the barracks? There’s plenty of us here. I’m one.’

‘I expect I’ll find him. They’ll tell me. Somebody will know.’

‘Christ Almighty!’

Pincher lays his head on his arms and gives up. After a little while he tries again. He says in a muffled voice:

‘A quid. That’s all I can.’ (All I can give you and still have my fare home. I’ll borrow when I get there. Eileen or Ma, they’ll lend me.)

‘I’m going to Edinburgh.’

Already South Africa is running his shoes up the back of his trouser leg to polish them. As soon as the All clear goes there’ll be a muster of Liberty Men. They’ll be inspected—for clean shoes, clean chins, clean blue collars, and white lanyards under them.

‘All right, then, you’re going to Edinburgh.’

The way in which Pincher says it makes it the end of

all conversation for all time. He has finished. But South Africa goes on :

‘ Hey, lend me a lanyard.’

‘ What ? ’

‘ A lanyard. I haven’t got one.’

Slowly, Pincher turns over on to his back. There’s a lanyard in his pocket. The thin white rope is not very clean by now, but it might pass in a quick muster of men being rushed out of barracks between air raids. He pulls it out, looks at it with disgust, then flicks it on to South Africa’s chest.

‘ That any good ? ’

South Africa might as well have it ; the silly bastard don’t mean no harm. It’s his Friday While, no getting away from that, and he’s entitled to do what he bloody well chooses. Nobody’s fault, really, just the mean bloody hardness of things. You’d got to get used to hardness. Like these potatoes, you’d almost think they were shoving you. Things shoved at your mind in the same way. It’s nobody’s fault. He’s the Red Watch, isn’t he ? You can’t get away from that. Three places up in the queue, and perhaps Pincher would have got a red card, too, or if his name had begun with an L. No good thinking of it, and no good thinking of Eileen neither. No good thinking.

South Africa picks up the lanyard and looks at it. Then for a few moments he plays idly with the slip-knot, unconscious of the gesture, running it up and down the lanyard, and with Pincher watching him. Then he raises his head, throws the loop under his collar, and passes the end through his black silk scarf.

‘ Thanks.’

‘ That’s all right, brother.’

He is suddenly still. Then he turns to look at Pincher.

‘ What did you call me ? ’

‘ I didn’t call you nothing,’ says Pincher sharply. ‘ I just said that’s all right.’



C. DAY LEWIS

TWO SONGS AND A SONNET

I

Is it far to go ?  
A step—no further.  
Is it hard to go ?  
Ask the melting snow,  
The eddying feather.

What can I take there ?  
Not a hank, not a hair.  
What shall I leave behind ?  
Ask the hastening wind,  
The fainting star.

Shall I be gone long ?  
For ever and a day.  
To whom there belong ?  
Ask the stone to say,  
Ask, too, my song.

Who will say farewell ?  
The beating bell.  
Will anyone miss me ?  
That I dare not tell—  
Quick, Rose, and kiss me.

II

HUNDREDS went down to the ocean bed,  
Hundreds fell from the sky,  
The shades in the street thickened,  
Blood stood in every eye.  
*Oh, kiss me or I'll die, she said,*  
*Kiss me or I'll die !*

He took a shadow into the bed  
Where she had drained him dry :  
With words that buzzed like bullets  
She pinned him to a lie.  
*Don't kiss me or I'll die, she said,*  
*Don't kiss me or I'll die !*

Thousands twined on the ocean bed,  
Thousands burned in the sky :  
Nursing a spent bullet,  
He let the world go by.  
*And I'll kiss it till I die, he said,*  
*Kiss it till I die !*

### SONNET IN DEJECTION

THE sea drained off, my poverty's uncovered—  
Sand, sand, a rusted anchor, broken glass,  
The listless sediment of sparkling days  
When through a paradise of weed joy wavered.  
The sea rolled up like a blind, O pitiless light  
Revealing, shrivelling all ! Lacklustre weeds  
My hours, my truth a salt-lick : love recedes  
From rippled flesh bared without appetite.  
O stranded time, neap and annihilation  
Of spirit ! Gasping on the ignoble rock  
I pray the sea return, even though its calm  
Be treachery, its virtue an illusion.  
Put forth upon my sands, whether to mock,  
Revive or drown, a liberating arm !

## ROSAMOND LEHMANN

### WONDERFUL HOLIDAYS—IV

It took some time to remove the green substance, a paste of his own invention, from John's face. Lit by an arrangement of electric bulb flex and battery hung about his person, it had given blood-curdling effect to his recent impersonation of a corpse behind the curtain. After the application of an entire pot of vaseline, it still adhered to his cheeks in scabrous patches. Brushing his mother's hovering hand away, he tore them off at last, skin and all, presented a distressingly raw and inflamed appearance, and gave off a powerful smell of Plasticine and gum fixative.

'Hurry, hurry!' said Jane. 'We're missing some of the party. Everybody else has gone on.'

'Do you want me to take off your make-up?' said Mrs. Ritchie.

'No, leave her alone,' said John. 'She looks quite decent for once.'

Jane's flawless mannequin mask incongruously surmounted the high plain neck-line, the ungarnished bodice and box-pleated skirt of her best pink silk uniform frock. At this brother's tribute, the eyes in the mask dilated in a wild flash and roll of gratification.

Plunging into his jacket, John added: 'Why can't she always make up?'

'Ten seems a bit young.'

'Meg says girls not much older than her do in America,' said Jane. '*Even at school.* Miss Potts would simply faint if she heard such a thing.'

'Come on,' said John. 'God, I'm hungry. Leave everything. Gerald and me are going to clear up tomorrow. May as well take this, though . . .'

He buzzed his portable electric bell a couple of times,

pocketed it, lingered a moment by the switchboard to touch it with loving fingers, and followed his womenfolk into the auditorium. Not an urchin remained in the hall, not one member of the local Dogs' Group prowled stiff-stepping in neurotic umbrage round the entrance. Not one footstep in the lane. The entire community so lately bursting the pitchpine ark had vanished and, leaving behind a shroud of complex exhalations, become embedded in the soundless night. Features of heroes, calls to patriotic spending blazed and trumpeted at no one from the posters. The multi-coloured paper banner executed by the school children and tacked to the middle beam cried *Salute the Soldier!* into empty space.

They switched off the last lights, locked the door behind them, and were out in the dark.

'Walk on slowly,' said John. 'I must just collect my bike.'

Hand in hand, Jane and her mother sauntered down the lane in the direction of the Carmichaels' house. On either side of them, the hawthorn hedges condensed the thick of night in their long slumbering palisades.

'I should almost like to go for a long walk in the dark with you,' said Jane. 'Yet I want to get to the party. I know what there's going to be: ice cream. Yet I keep thinking once the party starts we're getting nearer to the end of it. Then what shall we have to look forward to?'

'There's the sports next week.'

'Ah yes, I forgot. But I'm afraid Roger won't be able to stay for them. He's going to start painting me and Meg properly at eleven o'clock to-morrow. Do you think I'd better keep my make-up on?'

'I think not, on the whole. Painters often prefer ordinary skin colour for girls.'

'But he may not be that kind. He may think—you know—you heard what John said. . . . Will you ask him?'

'I'll ask him. . . . What can that boy be doing?'



Is he *making* a bicycle? We'd better wait here for him.'

Emerging from the lane at the cross-roads, they halted by the edge of the triangle of rough grass called Four Points Green. Here the country expanded wide and full. After all, it was not dark. They could see the ghost roads raying out into far spaces of downland and valley, the shapes of horses in a near-by field, the five elms at the field's edge posturing in furious zeal, like giants distraught. Overhead an amorphous patch of clouded incandescence showed the place of the obscured moon. An even lucent greyness suffused the air.

'The moon looks like a junket,' said Jane, staring upward, 'when we've all had some, and there's only shreds and watery stuff in the bowl.' She sighed. 'I suppose Mr. Carmichael isn't bad really?'

'What's on your mind about him?'

'Well, he doesn't seem very kind to Gerald and Oliver. Ordering the curtain down on them. After all, they were doing their best.'

'But he wasn't angry with them. They weren't a bit upset.'

'Was it joking?'

'Yes. He just thought they were getting a bit rough.'

'I see. But he might have said: "Well done, boys, you made everybody laugh," or something like that. Still, Meg says he's all right when you get to understand his ways.' She put an arm round Mrs. Ritchie's waist. 'I'm glad I don't have to understand your ways.'

A series of muffled buzzes warned them of John's approach.

'Where's your bicycle?' said Mrs. Ritchie.

'Stolen.'

'*Stolen*?! Where did you leave it?'

'Round by the back of the hut, I suppose, or in front. I don't know. I've hunted everywhere.'

'Round by the . . . where anybody could. . . . How could you be so careless?'

'Heaven knows I had enough to think of,' he said, bitter, 'without remembering to padlock my bike to my person. Well, come on. There's nothing to be done about it. I can always borrow yours. May the thief find my saddle even more filthily uncomfortable than I did.'

He started to walk on, his shoulders hunched. Respectively worsted in a telephone engagement with Redbury Chief Constable, printing a neat notice in coloured chalks (four different colours for L O S T) to put in Mr. MacBean's window, in silence his mother and sister followed him. Suddenly Jane said :

'You never had it !'

'Never had what ?'

'Your bike. Don't you remember ?—you had to walk because of the suit-case with the properties in. You left it at the Carmichaels.'

'So I did. Why on earth couldn't you say so before ? All this flap for nothing.' He let out an eldritch whoop, and in a spirit of encouragement caught his mother a whack across the shoulders. 'Poor old Ma. Saved again. Cheer up.'

They struck into Mr. Carmichael's top pasture and started across the blanched insubstantial expanse towards the house.

'Well, it's over. We've won through,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'Really, I do congratulate you. Your sketch went with a bang. Acting honours definitely go to you.'

'Mrs. Fuller enjoyed it, I'm pretty sure,' said Jane.

'I think everybody did,' said Mrs. Ritchie.

'Mrs. Fuller showed it most. She kept calling out. Mrs. Groner didn't show it at all. Nor did old Arthur—but I don't suppose he heard. Did Mrs. Plumley show it ?'

'Oh yes. She never stopped laughing.'

'Even in the frightening parts ?'

'There weren't any,' said John. 'It was one stupendous side-splitting farce from beginning to end.'

'She laughed in Roger's violin-playing,' said John. 'Some of it wasn't meant to be funny. I hope he didn't see her.'

'She laughed out of love for him,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'You know how she does.'

'Ah yes. Like she laughs at the hens.'

'Or you,' said John.

'Is that it?' said Jane. 'I've often wondered why she laughs when I go into the kitchen. Mummy, did the clapping sound loud after our sketch?'

'Very loud.'

'I didn't seem to hear any. *You* got a lot of clapping, Mummy. I think you got most. At least—after Roger.'

'You put up a jolly good effort,' said John. 'But Audrey was ghastly. She simply missed the whole point.'

'That wasn't her fault. The only point was the spectacle of me and Mrs. Carmichael teamed up as a couple of young ladies. Who thought of Audrey? Who rushed off without a word to fetch her?'

'And she didn't forget any of her part,' said Jane. 'At least she only got a few words wrong.'

'She can't act for toffee,' said John.

'She thinks she can,' said Jane, surprised at this verdict.

'She would,' said John. 'I shouldn't be surprised to hear she's got her Girl Guides badge for Dramatic Proficiency.'

'Do you think she has?' said Jane.

'She did rather seem to feel she was being a good influence,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'If I'd dried up, I think I could have counted on her to say: "Bad luck!" audibly.'

John uttered a brief hoot of laughter.

'John loathes her,' said Jane. 'Don't you, John? He calls her Fatima. Behind her back, of course. I think she's very kind. It's kind to say Bad luck. And

she mended my white party socks. She told me she's used to children, because she's got a little brother.'

'Oh well, she came in useful,' said John. 'We'll give her three rousing British cheers to-morrow when she pedals away.'

'If she pedals away. I have an impression she feels there is much still to be done among us. I warn you: I will not endure any more helpfulness from anyone.'

'I'll deal with her,' said John. 'He gave his sister a nudge and said imploringly: 'Don't say it, don't. Keep it back. Just this once.'

'How do you know what I was going to say? Anyway, I did think it was'—She added in a mutter—'right to be helpful.'

John threw back his head with a light howl.

'So it is,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'Don't tease her, John.'

'She's rather greedy, I must say,' said Jane, plumping at the last moment for the nasty spirit of the thing. 'Did you notice the helps of honey she took at tea?'

'The conjuror!' said Mrs. Ritchie quickly. 'I clean forgot about the conjuror. I was too busy to watch him. What was he like?'

'He was absolute hell,' said John. 'About ninety-eight, and a line of patter out of the Ark.'

'He was rather rude,' said Jane, prim.

'Rude?'

'Well, he got Cissie Hoddinott up on the platform and tried to make her shake hands with his—with Jack.'

'Jack?'

'His beastly doll,' said John.

'She didn't want to much,' continued Jane. 'But she did. And he kept saying: "Come along now, a nice squeeze, don't be shy. Call that a squeeze? Give him a nice squeeze like you give your boy-friend." As if she had one! She's only seven.'

'Oh dear, how dreadful!'

'And at the end he said the—Jack was going to sing

*The Bluebells of Scotland*, but he didn't, he sang a bit of *Tipperary*. I can't think how it happened.'

'He was blind drunk,' said John.

'No!'

'Well, squiffy. He kept on knocking over the glasses of water he was doing his drivelling tricks with.'

'Oh, his tricks were super,' said Jane. 'I couldn't see how he did any of them.'

'They were putrid,' said John. 'I could have done better myself with a week's practice. However, the kids enjoyed them. There was one ghastly youth who would keep going up on the platform and showing off—I can't think who he was—crowing out that one glass had a false bottom and he'd seen Feakes slip the handkerchief up his sleeve. Thinking himself jolly smart. Feakes obviously wanted to murder him. I don't blame him.'

'Well, I hope he got away all right in time for the last train,' sighed Mrs. Ritchie. 'Mrs. Carmichael swore she'd see to it.'

'Not a hope, I shouldn't think,' said John. 'There was some sort of muddle with the taxi.'

'Then he's walking back to Brading. Twelve and a half miles.'

'It's no good worrying,' said John. 'Perhaps he got a lift.'

They were through the gate, out of the field, and walking up the Carmichaels' drive. As they reached the front door, a figure standing before it moved aside and mumbled a faint good evening.

'Oh, Captain Moffat! I nearly walked into you.'

'I've rung several times,' he said. 'Can't seem to make anybody hear.'

'I think we're expected just to open the door and walk in. Probably there's too much noise going on for anyone to hear the bell,' said Mrs. Ritchie, cheerful, laying a hand on the latch. A prolonged rumble as of feet galloping up and down uncarpeted stairs, shouts, shrieks, yells of laughter came to their ears.



'No, no,' said Captain Moffat urgently, almost laying a detaining hand upon her arm. 'I won't come in. I can't possibly stay. Mrs. Carmichael very kindly asked me to join the party, but I can't possibly. I only came along to pay my respects. Perhaps you would explain to her: I've had a rotten headache all day. I think I'll cut along home. Besides, I'm expecting a telephone call. You might tell her that, would you? I'm expecting a call.'

'From your wife?'

'Yes, yes.'

'Oh, we're missing it, we're missing it,' broke in Jane, in a frantic whisper. 'I'm sure they've started to play Murder.'

Captain Moffat muttered on through closed teeth: 'I wrote to her yesterday and told her she'd better come back. I don't like the idea of her being up in town. Those last raids were child's play to what's coming, so I hear. They might start any moment. I can't have her exposing herself to them. Besides'—his voice went up into his nose, weak with self-pity—'I can't see to everything myself day in day out like this. There's all the potatoes to go in. It means too much stooping for me.'

'Can she leave her aunt?'

'She'll have to make some arrangement. That's what it comes to. I told her so in my letter. Dragging on like this. When all's said and done, I told her, she's got to consider her own health. It would be a nice how d'ye do if she broke down. These last two days, I don't know why it is, I've been completely deaf in one ear. Stone deaf. . . .' His voice trailed away.

In pregnant silence John began to apply his weight to his mother's shoulder, edging her towards the door.

'I'm so sorry, Captain Moffat. I'm sure your wife will take the first train home to-morrow and all your troubles will be over. If only her poor aunt—it would be best if the end were to come for her poor aunt as soon as possible, wouldn't it?'

‘It would be a happy release,’ he said, brightening for a moment. ‘It’s all been very trying for us.’

‘It’s trying all round really, isn’t it? Good-night, Captain Moffat. I’ll tell Mrs. Carmichael. She’ll be so sorry, but she’ll understand. I hope you enjoyed the show a little bit?’

‘Tell you the truth,’ he said, ‘I didn’t turn up.’

‘Oh, and you promised!’

He made a sound of nervous laughter.

‘It looked so uncommonly like rain, I thought I’d better not risk turning out. Besides, I’m not much good in a crowd. An over-heated atmosphere tries me very much.’

He stood, he stood, he blocked the drive, the door; he was a dead man behind them hanging from the strangled moon; slumped against the door in front of them, against the way to light and sound. He fixed her in the dark with his sightless eyes; the enormous force of his negative energy held her rooted. John turned the handle, pushed her in with Jane and shut the door rapidly upon him.

They stood in total darkness. From the stairs and the landing came creakings, a muffled giggle. All round them, invisible bodies breathed loudly, hemmed them in.

‘It’s Murder,’ whispered Jane, despairing. ‘It’s started. I knew it.’

From six inches away arose a subdued enthusiastic bubbling.

‘Mrs. Ritchie? Hello! Jane? John? Good, good, superb. Gerald here. We’ve just started the second murder, you’re just in time. Here, Jane, hold my hand, I need moral support. Mrs. Ritchie, would you care to join in? Daddy’s playing, he’s somewhere. If not, Mummy’s in the drawing-room. She refused to play. I’m so sorry we can’t turn the lights on, but perhaps you could manage to grope your way?’ He bawled: ‘Pax for a few moments! No murder till Mrs. Ritchie’s passed.’

Mrs. Ritchie stepped cautiously down the passage.

Somebody rushed past her and tumbled up the stairs. From above, Meg squeaked. A hidden agency opened the drawing-room door in front of her. The voice of Mr. Carmichael murmured a deprecatory greeting. She whispered, arch :

‘Are you the murderer?’

‘Aaa—ha!! . *Wouldn’t you like to know?*’

He sounded quite . . . really so very . . . quite unlike himself; such a tease, so curiously uninhibited, so close in the dark. Where were his hands? The skin crawled on her neck. She nipped past him in a hurry and shut the door.

‘Claire?’

But for the smothered glow of a log fire, here too all was lapped in shade.

‘Margaret! I’m over here on the sofa. Do forgive me. I’m forbidden to show a light, though I’m sure there’s nobody secreted in this room. Can you possibly find your way?’ Mrs. Ritchie found her way and sank upon the sofa beside her. ‘That’s right, darling. Lie the other end and put your feet up like me. You must be worn out. I am. I feel I must *sink* while they play this dreadful game. Actually I don’t suppose they’ll ever stop. I’ve known them go on for two hours and a half, and sometimes I can’t help wondering if it’s *good* for them. They seem to get such a strange flush and glitter. Still, it makes entertaining beautifully easy.’ She yawned.

Next moment, a prolonged blood-curdling screech appalled their ears. Somebody sprang up smartly from the window seat and galloped to the switches. Light flooded the room, revealing Audrey in the act of flinging open the door. ‘Stay where you are, everybody!’ she called; and marched forth into the now illuminated beyond to view the crime. The form of Oliver was seen to be stretched prone in the hall. The others stood against the passage wall or peered over the banisters. An indescribable babble was going on.

‘Boo ! ! !’

Mrs. Ritchie and Mrs. Carmichael leapt violently. The sofa was convulsed throughout its frame as the figure of a small boy shot up from behind it and, with this disagreeable exclamation, rendered full blast, revealed himself.

‘Oh, Norman,’ said Mrs. Carmichael, icy, ‘what a fright you gave me.’

‘Aha ! I thought I’d give you a start. You didn’t know I was there, did you ? I’ve been there all the time.’

He came and capered before them on short stout legs, twisting himself double, cackling with triumph.

‘If there’s one thing I *cannot* bear,’ said Mrs. Carmichael, ‘it’s someone bouncing out on me and saying “Boo !”’

He cackled the more. His knees, between hairy grey stockings and grey flannel shorts, protruded aggressively. Mrs. Ritchie saw him in her mind’s eye bundled into a belted navy blue raincoat, topped with a striped school cap, beating out tunes with his boots, loudly whistling, hanging out of the window of a crowded railway carriage. He tore from the room to join the others, shouting : ‘I gave them such a fright ! I was behind the sofa all the time and they never knew !’

‘Nobody will take the slightest notice of him,’ remarked Mrs. Carmichael.

‘Who on earth ?’

‘My dear, it’s Audrey’s brother. It struck me at the very last minute I *must* ring up her parents and invite them, but luckily they had colds and didn’t feel like it. But Mrs. Parker said Norman was so very keen to come, only she didn’t like him bicycling back alone in the dark. So what could I do but offer to put him up ? After what Audrey’s done for me. He turned up at tea time, and everyone has completely ignored him. I’ve scolded Meg, but it’s no use. She says he needs squashing. It does seem bad manners.’

‘He doesn’t seem to feel the squashing.’

‘He’s not very attractive,’ sighed Mrs. Carmichael. ‘But boys of nine or so are always repulsive, don’t you think? He enjoyed the show anyway.’

‘Oh!’ Light dawned. ‘He’s the boy John was so withering about who went up on the stage and saw through all the conjuror’s tricks.’

‘Oh dear, yes. I’m afraid poor Mr. Feakes got rather upset.’

They fell silent.

‘Do you think he caught his train?’ said Mrs. Ritchie gently.

‘He *cannot* have,’ said Mrs. Carmichael. ‘The taxi didn’t turn up till twenty past—it had another job—and the train goes at ten past. It doesn’t bear thinking of.’

‘Perhaps the taxi took him to Brading.’

‘No. The man particularly said it was out of the question. He hadn’t the petrol. He came from East Marling, you know—as a special favour. However,’ she added, looking on the bright side, ‘I gave Mr. Feakes a cheque on the spot, so that’s off our minds.’

They came bursting through the door, all talking at once. Mr. Carmichael followed them, with an expression of mild satisfaction.

‘Mummy, Mummy, your husband, our father, slew his first-born.’

‘Ugh-gh-gh! I nearly died,’ said Meg, falling into an armchair. ‘I felt somebody’s hot breath on my neck.’

‘It was only me,’ said Jane, falling beside her. ‘I was trying to find you for company.’

‘Jane’s breath is always scorching,’ said John. ‘Like wild animals. Reeking of carrion.’ He sauntered over to the refectory table at the end of the room and looked with absorption at the plates of buns, sandwiches and cakes, the bowls of trifle and preserves.

‘I was the only one who stayed in here,’ said Norman in his singularly strident treble. ‘I saw you all sneaking



out so I jolly well stayed behind. Look, I was just here, behind the sofa. Look ! ’

The two girls wreathed in the armchair glanced stony in his direction, looked away again, toying with each other’s lockets, their enamelled profiles laid side by side. Mr. Carmichael mixed three rum cocktails, and presented the ladies with one apiece. Roger met his own reflection in the mirror above the mantelpiece, smoothed his plumey hair.

‘ Who’s for one more murder before we eat ? ’ cried Gerald. His mother’s protest was drowned in a chorus of acclamation, and he started to deal the cards round.

‘ Mrs. Ritchie, you must play this time. ’

‘ No, no, I really won’t. Not for a thousand pounds I wouldn’t. ’

‘ Oh Mummy, you must, ’ began Jane. She pulled a card from the pack, glanced at it, laid it gently down in her lap and sat silent, placid, with transparent extroverted eyes.

Mr. Carmichel had the detective’s card. Once more the lights were extinguished ; with creak and padding tread the company dispersed. The parents relaxed and talked in low voices, sipping their drinks.

‘ How much did we make ? ’ said Mrs. Ritchie.

‘ Sixteen pounds eleven shillings and sixpence, ’ said Mr. Carmichael. ‘ Really a remarkable effort for a small village. There wasn’t a child who didn’t put in sixpence at least ; and there were a surprising number of notes. Remarkable. ’

Mrs. Ritchie repressed the wish to say that she had put in a pound. What had the Carmichaels put in ? No doubt Jane would have inquired of Meg and obtained satisfaction.

‘ How splendid, ’ said Mrs. Carmichael. ‘ What a grand start off to the week. It shows how much they enjoyed it. It was a success, thank goodness. We did deserve a success, didn’t we ? We’ve all worked so hard. I do hope there won’t be jealousy. ’

'Nerves are getting frayed on the committee,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'I hoped we could avoid class antagonism by having half gentry, half village, but it seems to be working out the opposite way. What it comes to is, the village feel we ought to be running it all for them. They're alarmed, I suppose, at the responsibility. If we butt in they think we're patronising, and if we retire they think we're snobbish. Both ways they're resentful.'

'My dear, I *know*,' said Mrs. Carmichael. 'Poor Mrs. Jessop—you know she's helping Mrs. Minchin run the Social—her husband rang me up in an awful state after lunch. She'd retired to bed in tears, he says he'll never let her lift a finger for the village again. She spent all morning making rock cakes and popped down herself with them to Mrs. Minchin before lunch. What do you think? Mrs. Minchin opened the door, took the whole tray and threw them at her head.'

'No! Why?'

'Oh, a lot of stuff about having left all the dirty work to her Dorrie, and who was going to see that the band got drinks, and of course we'd all be too stuck-up to come to her Social—and I don't know what. She's a bit mad, of course.'

'It's the change, Mrs. Plumley says,' murmured Mrs. Ritchie.

'Now I suppose we'll *have* to go,' sighed Mrs. Carmichael. 'And if we do they'll feel awkward and be on their best behaviour. What a pity it all is. . . . Oh, and Mr. Parkinson's resigned from being Treasurer. He says Mrs. Hoddinott accused him of embezzling her raffle money. He says Mr. Jebb can damned well take it on. But who's going to tackle Mr. Jebb? Margaret, would you? You might sort of joke him into it. You always make things sound so amusing.'

'Tell him you want to lay a problem before him for spiritual guidance,' said Mr. Carmichael.

At this moment they heard a distinct stir, a shift behind the sofa.

'*Mon Dieu !*' said Mrs. Ritchie after a short pause, '*vous n'allez pas me dire, par exemple, que ce maudit garçon est encore là ?*'

'*En effet,*' said Mrs. Ritchie. '*Tout prêt à sauter sur nous.*'

'*Tuons-le immédiatement,*' said Mrs. Carmichael.

'*C'est qu'il a peur, sans doute.*' \

'*Vous croyez ?*' said Mrs. Carmichael; adding in a half-hearted way: '*Pauvre petit.*' Then she said clearly: 'Hullo, Norman. Are you there again? Do you want to come and sit beside us?'

Silence.

A howl rose from the hall. Mr. Carmichael switched on the lights and went to do his duty. Unassumingly this time, Norman emerged from behind the sofa.

'Well, I may as well come out,' he said. He slid a glance at his hostess, and added with careful flatness: 'You gave me away to the detective, so there's not much point in my joining them for the investigation.'

'Norman, how awful of me. I didn't think.'

'It's all right.'

He bore no malice. He had his sister's ruddy springing cheeks and rubber mouth. With these, with his light brown glass eyes, chubby jutting nose and chin, and general appearance of being coated with a layer of varnished know-all jauntiness, he looked not unlike Mr. Feakes' Jack. Yet many, thought Mrs. Carmichael, noting this, would call him a jolly little beggar, keen, the right stuff.

'Still, I might as well,' he said; and took himself off, leaving the two ladies to exchange conscience-stricken grimaces.

'We have humiliated him,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'Never mind. It's something to know he has human sensibilities.'

Back swirled the horde around them. Roger came and perched gracefully on the arm of the sofa beside Mrs. Ritchie.

‘I do congratulate you, Mrs. Ritchie. Jane’s grip on life is remarkable, you need have no fears for her future. I shall bear the marks for many a long day,’ he added as Jane, flushed, exultant, came to join them.

‘Jane, you don’t mean to say you murdered Roger?’

‘I was determined!’ cried Jane, fixing him with starry eyes. ‘I waited ages’ beside you at the bottom of the stairs, to put you off. I knew it was you because I felt your corduroy trousers; you’re the only one wearing them. Then I went up on the landing and waited there another long time, then I crept down again quiet as a mouse, but *you’d* moved by then and I had an awful time finding you again. I nearly got somebody else. I think it was John——’

‘I’ll say it was,’ said John. ‘I felt her horrible clammy paws paddling on my face. I nearly let out a yell.’

‘—And at last I got you!’ continued Jane. ‘I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to reach your neck, but I did.’

‘You did,’ said Roger. ‘Undoubtedly you did.’ Ruefully he stroked his windpipe. ‘I’ve had some bad nightmares in my time, but nothing to equal that grisly moment.’

‘A promising criminal, your daughter,’ said Mr. Carmichael, grave, stroking his moustache. ‘I rather fancy myself as an amateur sleuth, but she completely took me in. That look of perfect innocence when I questioned her—not overdone, mind you, just simple childish honesty—coupled with a capacity for lying which I can only describe as——’

‘Barefaced,’ said Oliver, whirling upon them with plates of buns and sandwiches. ‘Our father can only describe it as barefaced. Jane, Jane, you’ve shaken our father’s faith in girlhood. His imagination boggles.’

Jane collapsed upon the sofa and buried her gratification and her bun in cushions.

Rapidly the generous board was stripped. Draughts of cider and ginger beer were tossed down. Cider, surely, was heady stuff? She saw John in conversation with

Roger lean back against the mantelpiece and make as if to prop his head upon his hand. His elbow slipped, he replaced it carefully, looking puzzled. One eyelid drooped, he was repulsively pale. Side by side at the buffet, the back views of Audrey and her brother displayed a striking family resemblance: square-planted, complacent, humourless. Methodically they ranged over the table, clearing it of its remains. The little girls sat together, their bare legs crossed, on a small couch at the end of the room, licking ice-cream off little spoons daintily, like cats, and conversing in serious undertones. Mr. Carmichael put on his spectacles, took up a gardening catalogue and composed himself in his armchair. Oliver thumped upon the piano; his mother lay back, her eyes shut, tapping out the tune with one foot. The party was petering out.

‘Jane,’ said Mrs. Ritchie, ‘when you’ve finished your ice——’

‘What when I’ve finished my ice?’ Jane shot upright.

‘Time to go home.’

At this announcement, amid yells of protest, the party sprang to life and began to ascend once more in giddy spirals. Gerald dashed back into the room after a prolonged absence.

‘Sorry, everybody, I was telephoning. Mummy, I got Daly long distance in ten minutes, wasn’t it superb? He may be coming on Monday for a night or two, with a friend. Is that O.K.? Oliver, stop that filthy row. Let’s have some decent music.’

He switched on the wireless. A husky voluptuous moaning, a swooning and a throbbing began to seep discreetly from the instrument. ‘Reynaldo and his Dreamy Boys! Superb!’ he cried.

‘Why don’t you dance? Do dance,’ said Mrs. Carmichael faintly.

‘Come on then.’

Gerald swung her to her feet and began to revolve.



What he lacked in skill he made up for in enthusiasm, and soon she began to smile, to sparkle and look young again. Presently everybody was dancing. Rocking in a stately restrained way in the arms of Mr. Carmichael, Mrs. Ritchie beheld Oliver, John, Meg and Jane locked together in a close ring, arms intertwined, stamping and shuffling: a crude performance. Norman was not among them. He sat on a chair against the wall, munching the last rock cake and looking sleepy. Threading hither and thither, deft, smooth-turning, Roger guided Audrey. He looked as if he knew all about how to dance; and Audrey, bouncing light as a balloon against him—yes, Audrey could dance too.

Nostalgic and deprecating, Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael now took the floor together. Gerald and Oliver danced with the little girls. 'That's right, Jane, *superb*, you're getting it,' cried Gerald, while Jane, stiff, demure, eyes on the ground, counting one two three, one two three, laboured round with him at arm's length. 'Mrs. Ritchie, Jane's got a marvellous sense of rhythm.'

Roger danced on with Audrey. She looked very happy. Earlier in the day, Mrs. Carmichael had suggested that if you really looked, you saw that Audrey had fine eyes. Not untrue, perhaps? Enlarged, dark, they overcame her cheeks and softly glowed. She looked like a young girl.

Mrs. Ritchie took a turn round the room with John; but the syncopated insinuations of Reynaldo could not beguile John's ears or mollify his limbs, and they desisted amicably, by mutual consent.

'I can't teach you,' she said. 'I don't know how it's done. I can only follow. Perhaps if you watched Roger you could pick it up.'

'Oh, Roger,' he said, without scorn or bitterness; 'I could never pick up what *he's* got. Might as well tell me to pick up fencing by watching him. He's the best fencer the school's had for years.'

'Audrey's a good dancer too.'

‘Mm.’ He studied her feet as she passed. ‘I suppose she is. I might get her to give me some tips.’

His mother shot a glance at him. Satirical? Not at all. Unaccountable youth. Or was it that despising her as he did in her person, her femininity, he could permit himself to make use of her accomplishments for his purposes; whereas Roger, unapproachable, hero-figure, must not even in imagination be exploited?

‘Mrs. Ritchie, will you dance?’

She found herself gliding and turning easily in the circle of Roger’s arm.

‘Do you dance a lot?’ she said after a while. ‘But of course you do.’

‘As much as I can. I had a marvellous party in London last week, and I hope to fit in another next week before I go home.’

‘Are people really still dancing in London?’

‘Oh yes, rather. Like mad.’ He sounded surprised. ‘I suppose some parents do prefer to keep their daughters in the country if possible, but there seem plenty left.’

‘You dance beautifully,’ she said. It was absurd: she could not refrain from feeling shy. I’m old enough to be his mother, she told herself. But it was his air of tolerant authority, his self-sufficiency, his elegance.

‘Let me return the compliment.’ He gave a little bow, a little laugh.

‘I haven’t danced for years,’ she said.

‘I adore it, I must say,’ said Roger. ‘My sister and I are going to give a little dance at home at the end of this month. It’s her sixteenth birthday.’

‘Have you a sister? That’s nice. What is she like? Is she pretty?’

‘Going to be I think. She’s a bit on and off still, but I think she’ll make it.’

‘Is she like you?’

‘They say she’s like me.’ He gave another little laugh. He whirled with her, round and round, smoothly,

at the end of the room. 'It's an odd thing,' he said as they started to glide on again, 'I *cannot* dance with my sister. I don't know why it is. My friends tell me she's quite a fair dancer, but so far as I'm concerned she might be a sack of potatoes.'

He sounded baffled, quite indignant. He was very young after all. She looked up at him and laughed. The tune came to an end. He kept his arm round her, waiting for the next one to begin. When it did, he said: 'Ah, my favourite waltz!' and started off with her again. It seemed strange to be dancing to tunes with which she was totally unfamiliar. She did not say so: it would make her part of what must be to him totally unfamiliar history. Mr. Carmichael had taken the floor with Audrey. An athletic waltzer of the old school, he dipped, swung, reversed her vigorously. Otherwise the sexes had become segregated. The little girls hopped about together, bunching each other's skirts up. The three boys circled together in the crouching attitude of a football scrum. From time to time Gerald broke out and did a few pirouettes and mincing runs with arms outstretched, on tiptoe. Presently Oliver tripped him up and they all fell together in a heap. The eyelids of Norman drooped lower, lower, closed entirely. Mrs. Ritchie said:

'I've put those cherry branches you gave us in a white vase in my bedroom. They look so beautiful. I can't tell you what pleasure they give me.'

'Good!' he said. 'They are nice.'

'Roger, I can never thank you properly for your playing to-night. You simply made the evening. You must have seen for yourself how much the village appreciated it. They'll never forget you.'

'I assure you,' he said, 'there's nothing to thank me for. I enjoyed myself hugely: it was pure self-indulgence. But it was a disgraceful noise, really it was. I'm hopelessly out of practice. I haven't touched the fiddle since I was at my private. I fancied myself as a Maestro

then.' He uttered his characteristic amused two-note laugh.

'You're more interested in painting now?'

'Well . . . yes. . . .' He considered. 'I suppose I am. I took to it about eighteen months ago. Mr. Carrington, that's the art master I expect you know, is responsible really. He encouraged me.'

'I saw two of your portraits in the drawing school when I went down to see John. I remember them very well. I was so impressed.'

'Did you really?' He sounded mildly surprised, mildly gratified. 'That's excellent news. I must say I find portraits fascinating.'

'You're going to go on with it? Make it your career?'

'I don't know. I do wonder.' He sounded impersonal, incurious. 'I'm in hot water all round at present. My Papa destines me for the family business. He doesn't care to see me idling about and fiddling with brushes. He's worried. Mr. Carrington's worried too. I appear to be stuck. My report says: Unable to finish anything. What is to be done?'

'It's just one of those bad patches. They're inevitable. You'll make a big step forward soon.' But she felt at a loss. What intuition, what secret principle was at work within him? What moved him? He was without ambition? Delightful dilettante, he would come to nothing?

'Jane's so excited about sitting to you,' she said. 'I'm afraid she may have a hang-over to-morrow and not look her best. You must be firm with her about sitting still. She'd do anything to please you—stand on her head if necessary.'

He laughed. 'She's a charming person,' he said. 'I've quite lost my heart to her. She's incredibly paintable, isn't she?'

'Do you think so? I'm so glad.' She felt extreme gratification.

‘Those gold lights in her skin. I really must paint her some day, if I may.’

After a pause, she said : ‘Not to-morrow?’

‘Well, actually I’m leaving to-morrow, I believe. I think I really must. Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael must have had enough of me.’ He laughed. ‘Besides I believe I’m expected elsewhere to-morrow.’

‘What a pity.’ A blow. A blow for Jane : better not break it to-night. ‘Perhaps you’ll be coming to stay again in the summer?’

‘I do hope so,’ he said. ‘I’ve had such a perfect time. It’s such incredibly beautiful country here.’

She said, feeling shy : ‘Perhaps you’d come and stay with us some time. We’d all love it.’

‘How very kind of you. That would be delightful. There’s nothing I’d like better.’ The tune died away. The voice of Reynaldo himself came on the air, crooned out a tender good-night. It was midnight. ‘Unfortunately,’ said Roger, ‘the shades of the prison house will have closed on me by the summer. I shall be in the Army.’

‘In the Army? As soon as that. I forgot. You’re eighteen?’

‘Eighteen next month.’

‘Are you dreading it?’

‘Oh no.’ He smiled. ‘I’m rather looking forward to it.’

He would go into the Army, and be drilled and do fatigues and go on courses, and be sent to his O.C.T.U. and get his commission, and have embarkation leave and vanish from England under security silence and . . . come to nothing?

‘Perhaps the war will end,’ she said.

She looked at him. He looked away over the room smiling secretively. What was his meaning? ‘You see, as things are, it’s rather pointless really, isn’t it, to commit myself, to choose, to have a future . . .’ Was that it? Or had he no meaning?



Now this party was really over. The hostess's face looked tiny, mournful with weariness ; the host yawned without restraint. That's what we shall remember best about the war : everybody yawning, dropping with sleep. Jane submitted to her overcoat without demur. Her face was vacant. She was far past the point of asking Roger exactly what time to-morrow she was to be ready. Audrey came downstairs : during the last ten minutes she had removed the somnolent Norman and, like a good sister, stretched him in his bed. All the Carmichaels gathered at the front door with jokes, with thanks, with promises to telephone, with kisses and handshakes to speed their guests. Suddenly another note became added to the din : an urgent yodelling torn from a throat in the torments of dementia.

' *Puffles !* ' cried Meg. ' Shut in my bedroom all this time. Oh, *Puffles !* '

Up she flew. Next moment down shot *Puffles* and hurled himself among them, gabbling, shrieking, swooning at their feet in circular swathes.

' Oh *Puffles*, *Puffles !* ' ' Oh, the poor man ! ' ' Shut in all the evening and never said a word ! ' ' Does he want to go outies then ? ' ' Mummy, we must take *Puffles* for a run, to make up to him. ' ' Good boy, outies, come on then. ' ' Come on, let's all go. Mummy, we shan't be long. Just up the lane. '

The front door banged, shutting off Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael. Feet pounded down the darkness and away. Shouts, laughter diminished in the distance. Mrs. Ritchie grasped Jane to her side. They found themselves alone in the drive.

' Where've they gone ? ' said Jane, dazed, walking at her mother's side.

' Only just a little way up the lane with *Puffles*. You heard them say they'd be back very soon. '

' Did John go ? And Audrey ? Why couldn't I go ? They went without telling me. '

' Oh darling, it's nothing to miss. Just groping about

in that pitch dark muddy old lane. You wouldn't have enjoyed it a bit.'

'Did Meg go?'

'No, no, I'm sure Meg's going to bed this very moment.'

'I thought I saw her dash out of the door.'

'No.' Mrs. Ritchie suppressed an identical image.

'I'll ask her to-morrow. Did John ask you if he could go?'

'No, he didn't. He's a bad boy and I'm cross with him.'

'I wouldn't have thought Audrey would go without asking.'

The face of Audrey at the door came before Mrs. Ritchie; sparkling, eager, lost to decorum. 'I bet they won't come back for hours.'

Only too likely. She saw them ranging the countryside with whoop and chorus. I won't have it, she told herself, furious, impotent.

'Darling,' she said, 'I'm glad you stayed with me. I should have been sad going home alone.'

Jane pressed her hand. They crossed the lane and climbed the steep withy bank into the pasture, where open space made a faint lightening of the deep darkness.

'We forgot to bring a torch,' said Jane. 'Never mind. I like being out at night with you. Walking, walking, walking in nowhere. It doesn't seem as if we were in the world at all.' She squeezed her hand tightly again.

'Oh Jane, I haven't danced for years. Not since you were born.'

'Haven't you? You seemed to get on all right. I noticed you smiling. I'm so glad Roger didn't ask me to dance. I should have felt awful, not knowing how to.' She spoke with simple relief and satisfaction. 'Meg was telling me all about her school in New York while we were eating those ices. It was very interesting. She thinks their standard of education rather low in some ways. She was awfully behind in history when

she came back. But up more in Current Events. . . . Oh Mummy, isn't Norman an awful boy? He took the very last piece of chocolate cake. He said: "Anybody want this? Then I will." Oh, he is awful.'

They reached the front door, opened it and went into their house. Mrs. Plumley had left one light burning in the sitting room.

'I suppose I'd better leave it for those wicked creatures,' said Mrs. Ritchie. 'Quick to bed, darling.'

'Can't we wait up?' Jane rocked on her feet.

'No, no. I'm going to bed too. I shan't wait up.'

'Is it after midnight?'

'Long after.'

'Ah! . . . Good! . . .'

Half carrying Jane upstairs, Mrs. Ritchie pulled her clothes off, removed the remains of lipstick and rouge with face cream, brushed her hair cursorily.

'I can't be fished to do my teeth,' said Jane, falling into bed. 'Tell me the minute you hear them come in, won't you? I wonder if John likes Audrey any better now.'

They kissed. Mrs. Ritchie went down, took a sheet of paper, wrote on it in large print: 'Good night. Go straight to bed'; left it propped against the lamp, went upstairs and undressed. Coming from the bathroom, she listened at Jane's half-open door. Deep breathing issued softly, rhythmically from the shadows.

She got into bed and lay with her bedside light on, staring at the tall white vase of cherry. Beautiful, beautiful, triumphant consolation. But one branch was withering already; and as she watched, a whole flurry of petals dropped down out of the sheaf and fell on the table.

Above the roof the arch of night began to throb through all its length and breadth: a strong force of our bombers passing overhead. She took up *Shakespeare's Image of Man and Nature* and read a few passages, but her eyelids sank. She lay in a coma. It was just under an

hour before she heard the front door creak open, close again. Cautious footsteps, whispers. They were trying to be quiet. She heard John's tread going through the kitchen to the larder, returning. He opened the cake tin noisily. They would be finishing off the dough cake. Another few minutes and Audrey came tiptoeing upstairs. 'Good-night,' called John from below: cheerful, friendly.

She leaned out towards the light to extinguish it. As she moved, something slipped out of the sheets on to the floor: Jane's writing pad. Of course, Jane had selected this bed rather than her own to rest on before the performance. She picked it up. She read:

*Darling Angie, how are you? I shall be staying up till twelve o'clock to-night. We are having wonderful holidays.*

## GEORGE BARKER

### TWO POEMS

#### TURN, TURN YOUR FACE AWAY

Who locked you in the shuddering  
Rock that will rot and die  
The day that you turn your suffering  
Face away ?

Who fixed you in the form from  
Which like a ghost in a wall  
You look out on the workings of a will that  
Forgives us all ?

Who pinned you at a crossroad where  
With four limbs spread  
It is you who are glittering like a star and  
We who are dead ?

I established you in the diamond of  
The subterranean heart,  
All dazzle hidden. How can such brightness  
Not puzzle the dark ?

I with a hand of guilt laid rock  
On stone to cover you over,  
Only to discover that I had made a shade  
Matter for ever.

The kiss is diagonals on which you die  
Smiling in sweat because  
The turn of your face away would undo  
The cross of the kiss.

Who rubs out double death together  
Save procreative fate,  
So that we shed the fire, the child, each other ?  
Turn, turn away your face !



## TO FATHER GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, S.J.

OVERHEAD on a wing under dread, treading  
Bright verbs on silence, writing white on hereafter,  
He is for ever his feature of feather shedding,  
Bedding all beautiful in the far harder and softer  
Breath of his word, bird in a thrash alighting  
All claws for the world that its heart is after,  
The wide wonder that, into his hand of writing,  
Rose up, eyes open, to meet her emasculate master.

Father of further sons who wear your feather  
For the good glory of the word, I speak for  
All of us who inherit any merit of your feature:  
O long-faced convert, look down and seek for  
Worthiness in one of us, and let him speak  
Evangelising the evil from our nature.

## JOSEPH GURNARD

### KILLING TIME

My father walked, or rather nipped, to the hotel counter, where forms had to be filled in. '*Ici, madame?*' he asked insistently. Where else? And how the accent bothered! I could feel *Issy Madam* tickling my scalp. He dealt with both forms, leaving me to add my signature. When it came to the second form, I looked over his shoulder, looked again, and saw that, after Profession or Occupation, he had written 'KILLING TIME.'

I wasn't yet, it is true, earning my way. I had finished with a university and was wondering where to turn next. Much Latin and more Greek had been my undoing. But that uncompromising, hurtful, prickly little phrase on the identity paper went home. Killing Time! So to him, could my hesitations, my fearfulness, my doubts about life be jauntily summed up.

'Time,' I said with an effort at dignity, 'takes a lot of killing,' and walked—ah, but even then I slouched where he would have sped—into the *prix-fixe* restaurant. It was empty, our train having got in at half-past five.

'You've forgotten the bags,' said my father:

I walked on.

That must have been in—let me see—1924. Or was it 1926? No, because in '26 came the General Strike, when my father jumped up and blew a whistle, and I was studying Donne. More of that another time. The dates don't signify. A thing happens or it doesn't happen.

I am not sure even to-day that my father intended me to read what he had written; it was one of those things that slip out. He had set down the phrase, of course, in English; I was spared the painful gaze of Madame; and when the paper was waved towards me to sign,

my father held on to it, so that the offending words were half covered. Perhaps he had only meant me to know that *something* was afoot, the kind of warning imparted by a sigh or shrugged shoulders. Or he may have been sorry for having gone so far, since after all we had no particular quarrel at that moment. It is more than likely, too, that he felt uncertain of his French.

‘The bags!’ Bags of gold wouldn’t have made me turn.

There was a sound behind me—‘M’dame!’ ‘Monsieur!’—as of friendly scuffling in the hall.

While I was bowing to the bowing waiter, and before I could accept the chair pulled back for me—a very well-chosen seat, I thought, recommended by a flick of the napkin—there came another cry, ‘Nearer the window!’ and my father appeared in the doorway, running now at full tilt, with a heavy bag in each hand.

At least, I suppose they must have been heavy. Their combined weight seemed to propel him irresistibly forwards. He could just (his actions proclaimed), and only just, manage.

Under his arm, however, were a number of books wrapped in a newspaper, and these looked like falling. One began to slide; if my father had been able to retrieve it with his teeth he would have done so. As it was he made a scruffing movement like a dog trying to nab a flea, so that the book was squeezed out and shot to the ground scattering papers.

‘Oh, sick!’ exclaimed my father. The waiter attempted to help; he was thrust aside. What business was it of his?

‘Joseph’—this was to me—‘you see what has happened now?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘You’ve dropped something.’

‘Very well, then, don’t stand there stock—stark—are you listening to me? Don’t stand there empty-handed! Think what ought to be done!’

‘Suppose I pick up the papers?’

‘No, leave the papers—those are my phonetics notes. I know what order they should be in. Here, you can take this bag—not that bag, this one! Oh, Joseph, sometimes I think you’re the most awful fool.’

The remaining books cascaded to the floor. This time Madame came to the rescue while my father was busy explaining to me about the second bag. ‘Mind how you hold it; the lock’s broken. It’s liable to give way if you’re not very careful, and that would cause a catastrophe. Ah, thank you, M’dame.’ The good lady had collected his books, put together those that had fallen in half, made them all into a parcel again.

Well, the lock held; it had done so many times before. My father permitted the waiter to stow the luggage by a hat-stand well under his eye. Still wearing his overcoat, because of draughts from the window, he raised his hand to a forehead pink and perspiring. ‘Oh, I’m done, my dear!’ he said with a sudden collapsed smile. He drank some water and raised his hand again. The movement must have brought back to him the mild headache that besets every traveller, for he closed his eyes and began to rub his brow, murmuring at the same time, ‘Ça passe, ça passe, ça passe, ça passe, spuh, spuh . . .’ until the words became a low, monotonous buzz. It was like a bumblebee, highly efficacious. I, of course, knew the magic formula (hadn’t I been made to practise it?), but the waiter listened and stared in amazement. My father suddenly said, ‘I’m hungry,’ and opened his eyes. It was left to me to choose. We ate saucisson and whiting and wild duck and drank a litre of table wine. We raised glasses, we beamed at one another, my father remarking how cheaply one could dine if one knew the right places. ‘Ah, that’s better,’ he said at last, unbuttoning a waistcoat, so that now his clothes gaped in layers like a cut cabbage. ‘Joseph, old thing, we’ll have a cigar. Why not? Let’s be dogs. I wish your mother could see us. I must send her a postcard, by the way; don’t let me forget it. And

remember in carrying that bag upstairs that it's liable to give way. Things have to be handled properly in this world, you'll find, or else it's no good.' The waiter still hovered, watching my father's lips, in case the bumblebee should fly out. After paying the bill my father said judicially, poising his cigar, '*Où est Monsieur Coué?*' The waiter shrugged and pouted. '*Dîtes-moi,*' persisted my father, '*où est Monsieur Coué?*' '*Pardon, monsieur,*' the waiter murmured unhappily, and stood on one leg. 'The man's an imbecile!' exclaimed my father. 'I ask him a simple question, expecting to get a simple answer, and what do I find? Never heard of Coué! It isn't as though I were asking him about the man in the moon, or how to change cheese into—into iron pyrites. You'd expect someone living in Nancy to know something about Coué. Why, here we are, all the way from London, and it wouldn't surprise me one atom if the first person I met in the street outside came up and said, "*Où est Coué?*" It would be the most natural thing in the world. Why, you'd expect it. You could bet your bottom dollar on it. *Mauvais garçon,*' he went on, shaking his head, '*très mauvais garçon!*' He glanced regretfully at the coins in the saucer, as though wondering whether it was too late to withdraw a few, but apparently thought better of it, and we filed out. This time I did my share of the carrying.

The waiter's attitude had surprised and rather reassured me: he at least didn't suspect why we were there. Nancy, for us, had been the home of the Coué Institute, of the master himself. Our visit had been planned in the cure-seeking, miracle-reciting atmosphere of a pilgrimage to Lourdes. In London we had read the books (they were among those that cascaded), we had learnt the various formulæ and quoted the parables. 'Every day and in every way I am getting better and better' had become my father's favourite saying. He got up with it in the morning, combined it with his

rubbing exercises : thus—‘Every day’ (breathe deep) ‘and in every way’ (slap) ‘I am getting better’ (slap, slap) ‘and better’ (breathe out). He pinned it up on his shaving mirror. He said it as a grace before meals. He came back to it with his mouth full. He gave it every kind of emphasis and intonation. And in the middle of a conversation he would catch my eye and say, ‘Repeat after me.’ I should have preferred to read over quietly in my room the health-radiant words. My performance never satisfied. ‘No, no, *not* like that ; don’t hurry and mumble so ; put some life into it as though you believed what you were saying !’ Ah, if only I had ! But he believed, while I didn’t. And I was the one for whom the miracle was desired.

The books didn’t seem to have much effect ; my nightmares, my claustrophobia were getting worse ; when I began trembling it wasn’t easy to leave off ; so it was decided that we should go, my father and I, to Nancy.

It was spring, and I was shaking like a leaf, the day we stood at Victoria waiting for the boat train. All the people who had chosen our compartment looked remarkably ill-disposed. Some goggled and sniffed ; others whispered, exchanging amused looks. A schoolboy in the corner, with an exaggerated display of secrecy, was transferring the contents of one pocket to another. Surely he was acting the part ! In transit I observed a piece of string, a conker, a dirty handkerchief, some coins and torn stamps, each of which was lovingly handled and examined, until a snarled ‘Put ’em away !’ from a bursting elder—papa, I imagine—caused them to vanish by magic. I loathed these people, but how I envied them their grossness, their crass invincibility !

I couldn’t, no matter how hard I tried, take the universe for granted. ‘Joseph,’ my father was fond of saying, ‘you lock things up too much in yourself—spit it out !’ I couldn’t spit it out, especially to him. And what was there to spit ? Bile, entrails, sex, myself and my family, the world as yet unknown, those who had tried patiently



to teach me, ambitions, fears. Once start and there would be no end.

So we had come to Nancy, I lankily timid and adolescent, my father shouldering the burdens of the world, as was his delight and habit. Nancy—pronounced at home like the girl's name—had long ago conjured up the image of a simple beautiful girl, whom I almost expected to meet walking in the sunshine. The town, I must say, was remarkably pretty. After dinner my father and I explored its climbing streets, walked under the trees of the main square, passed the University, listened to a band in the warm twilight. We talked about Life: my father, that is to say, cocked his head up at me and shouted: 'Oh, Joseph! You will never know how lucky you have been! If I'd a quarter of the chances you've had—and I don't grudge them for a moment—I might have been anywhere to-day! Anywhere! No one ever brought *me* to Nancy. I've travelled, yes, more than you'll probably ever travel, but it wasn't easy, I can tell you; it didn't just fall into my lap. Buck up now, old thing!' I smiled the sort of grin a dog attempts for its master, and we walked on. 'Yes,' I believe I said, or 'of course'—something of that kind.

The next morning we set out early to find M. Coué. Not only the waiter didn't know him, but in the street where the great man lived a passer-by could not direct us. At last we discovered the house, white and cool behind trees in a high-walled garden. M. Coué? The maid much regretted, but the Master was ill, seriously ill. We called again that evening and next day. He was getting worse; it was only a question of time. On the third day we were told that he was dead. 'Poor M. Coué! We looked at his picture in the self-help book—a perky, intent face—and I thought how, if we had come a few days earlier, he might have rescued me from my nervous plight. Now that he was gone, I developed suddenly a faith in him and his works which I could

never feel while he was living. One touch of his hand, it had been said, was enough to start the cure. I was almost as disappointed as my father, who now saw the affair in terms of pounds, shillings and pence.

Well, that was over.

Perhaps, though, not quite all over. I have the idea that things, like people, repeat themselves. A situation doesn't simply grow or resolve; it reaches a point of recurrence, with the same decimal coming round, time and again, so that after a while we can't help noticing. The identity paper floored me, was thrust away. Gradually and without knowing how or why, as that hard little phrase worked its way through my flesh like shrapnel, I decided that I would indeed, in my own walks and ways, kill Time—or, if not kill, then bitterly wound. . . .

*Dum loquimur, fugerit invida ætas !*

'Even as we talk, envious Time has fled.' (Forgive the Latin; it was highly paid for.) But who are we, in the circumstances, that Time should be envious? The tag, as so often, stops short. It comes from Horace, a satisfied man. More than that I can't reveal; the calendar from which I have copied it gives only the half-dozen words and the name of the author.

And Time, I notice, has cheated again, for the date on the calendar is last November's.

## NORMAN NICHOLSON

### AUGUST

HERE the tide of summer thrusts its last  
Wave, and ebbs, and leaves the white foam stranded  
Among the weeds and wagons—white flowers of foam,  
Wild carrot and mayweed, The sandstone wall  
Dribbles with hanging plants, and the slant of the  
embankment

Is tousled and tussocked with grass. Up tall  
Turrets of sorrel the bindweed climbs  
Like a spiral staircase, and cinders from the railway  
Drift in the one white bell that swings from the top.  
Bramble claws among the sleepers, and its ruff of petals  
Slips from the green berry, and grass and flower and  
weed,

Topheavy now with seed, are tired and bent.  
The fists of the blooms unclinch and let the fruit  
Fall from the palm of the hand. And we, in a season of  
work,

Close our eyes, nor count the crown of our labours,  
But wait while the dark pods form in the brain,  
And the fingers ripen in the drowse of autumn.

## C. V. WEDGWOOD

### LEAVING HOME

MARTA had not been in the parlour at the Pfarrhaus for over two years.; not since all the Confirmation candidates, neat and subdued in new black dresses, had waited in the passage, to go into the parlour one by one for the three minutes' talk and the signed certificate of Confirmation with the picture of Jesus in the Upper Room. This time she sat on a chair in the parlour and waited for the pastor to come to her.

In the room all was silent but for the buzzing of a fly among the tiers of geraniums in the wicker stand which doubly screened the net-shrouded window-panes. It was close even for July. She was glad she had put on the new white muslin blouse, even if it was a pity to travel in it.

There might be finer rooms than the Pfarrhaus parlour in her aunt's hotel in Lausanne, she thought, but was glad all the same to think that the village could show an interior of superiority and refinement. Her eyes passed from the handsome stove of shining faience, decorated with the death of Winkelried in high relief, to the polished mahogany table veiled in a cloth of green silk crochet on which, symmetrically disposed, lay three massive leather albums; travelled next to the upright piano with brass candlesticks, whose open fretwork front revealed a lining of pale green silk, and rested approvingly on statuettes of William Tell and Pestalozzi on its top. Over the piano the oil-painting of Herr Pfarrer's father was flanked by bead wreaths in glass cases. At regular intervals and in tiers of three the imitation leather of the walls was hidden by interesting pictures. Moses received the Tables of the Law and Luther defied the Emperor. Three men, old, young and middle-aged,

raised their right hands in a great oath to free their country; Marta's eyes lingered on the central figure, William Tell, bearded, broad-shouldered, stern and brave.

The door jerked open and Herr Pfarrer ambled startingly into the room. He was a thin, large-limbed, elderly man, who seemed to be all on strings. Hands and feet shot out at disjointed angles like an ill-managed puppet's. He advanced with an uncertain, peering run, which was yet much slower than it seemed, and held his head poked forward and twisted a little sideways, the result of astigmatic short sight, inefficiently corrected by the steel-rimmed pince-nez which galled the bridge of his nose. Before he opened his mouth strangers had already guessed that the voice would be high-pitched and stammering.

Marta, drawing herself to her feet at his approach, noticed none of these things consciously. He was, to her, as much a part of the village as the sharp-spired, whitewashed church in whose shadow he lived, and far more than the new schoolhouse. Saying good-bye to him was almost like the mute farewell she had taken that morning of the upper fields under the shadow of the pinewoods and the view over the ridge into the further valley.

'So—so,' he said, 'you are going to England.'

He was surprised to see how mature she had grown since he had last noticed her, how self-possessed in her good black skirt and new white blouse, her thick black hair parted in the middle and welling out in two wing-like swathes on either side of her grave, rosy face. He had a remote impression that she had become a beautiful girl. The 'figure of a goddess' drifted unattached through his mind from a novel of his student days. He noticed her serious pale grey eyes, wide-set under her broad forehead, the freshness of her skin, the generous lines of her mouth. A good family, he thought; they had farmed the same land for generations. Her mother, too

—the old miller's daughter—a good family, a solid family.

Suddenly he began to ask her questions about her journey. Where was she staying, who was meeting her at her intermediate stations, at Aarau, at Basel, in London. If she should be stranded she must remember the Mission he had told her of. She would always be sure to find a Mission Sister at a big station if she was in difficulties; even a Catholic Sister would help her, though it would be better to find the Protestant Girls' Hostel.

Running out of ideas, he stopped short and peered at her with silent benevolence.

Marta thanked him. "I must be going."

But he had got his second wind and began to advise her about religion and the world. He hoped the family to whom she was going in London would be good, religious people. She must ask them about churches and pastors. She would remember to say her prayers and read in the books which he had recommended. His wife, too, had specially said that she took a very good paper, for Christian women, which she would send on every month when she had finished with it. She must be very careful. Strangers, particularly in London—— He stopped, not able fitly to express something he had in mind. It was not, he remembered, the first time she had left home; surely she had spent six months in the reception office of an aunt's hotel in Lausanne? She must be able to take care of herself.

He stopped short, clasped his knotty hands together and said suddenly: '*Lasset uns beten.*'

In an unsteady voice he asked God's blessing and guidance for Marta Schaffner in the wide world whither she was going. When he had done he shook hands and shepherded her to the door. She had blushed from forehead to chin.

Outside the warm July day seemed cool after the geranium-laden room. She walked quickly down the



hill towards her home, her light, strangely inexpressive eyes fixed on the wide valley and the road running parallel with the narrow river until a low spur of hills shut them both from sight. Over that low spur of wooded hills, on a clear day, she had often seen the sharp, white peaks of the mountains far off. In some weathers you could see the Jungfrau, but so rarely that when it happened one or other of the school-teachers would be sure to go round from classroom to classroom summoning any of the children who had not seen it before, and they would come trampling out on to the schoolhouse steps to stare. One of the teachers would explain: it was their heritage.

It was her heritage. Marta could not see the Jungfrau to-day. She could not even see the nearer mountains. The far sky was hazy. But she knew that the mountains were there and that they belonged to her, and that she was to go away out of sight of them for a long time into a flat country where it always rained.

The greater part of the village lay spread out at the foot of the hills. As she went down the hill, step by step, the village came up to meet her. So it had always done, when, as a child, she had trudged downhill from school to the warmth and secrecy of home. So it did now, and she was aware of an indescribable, unexpressed emotion as each familiar place came into view, drew alongside and passed her. The Bear Inn with whitened walls and brown bears painted on either side of the door; Meier's light-coloured farm with the wooden balcony running all around, fringed with bright geraniums in pots, and Luzi Meier scrubbing potatoes in a wire basket under the splashing pump; the joiner's shabby house with trestles askew among the sawdust in the beaten-earth forecourt sheltered by the overhanging eaves, and planks lying across them and the fresh tang of newly-sawed wood, and always three or four of his younger children bundled in shapeless pinafores, chewed red ribbons on their bristling pigtails,

crawling about the doorstep; the massive building of the millhouse where the Keitelbach plunged down the hillside and lost itself suddenly in a tunnel under the road; the flat wall by the post office with the postmistresses's cat asleep. The postmistresses were twin sisters, gaunt, broad-shouldered, with grey hair scraped away from weathered faces. They took it in turns to sit behind the sliding glass window selling stamps and lottery tickets and stamping insurance cards or to set out up the village street and to the outlying farms, the mail-bag slung from shoulder to hip. On the low wall the coloured congested poster of a travelling circus, scraped to its final adhering shreds, had clung for as long as Marta could remember. The village disapproved of gaieties and no circus had ever pitched its tents within its boundaries. The poster had been someone's mistake.

Twenty yards beyond the post office and just where the main road branched down the valley towards Aarau stood the Schaffners' farm, stone, whitewashed to the first floor, brown wood above, with vast roof and overhanging eaves.

For a working day the house was unusually still and bright, celebrating a private Sunday of its own. The two stone steps before the door had been newly washed and four pots of geraniums brought from inside the house and placed along the window-sills. Except for the champing movements in the byre and the steady splash of the water flashing in its unceasing arc from the spout of the pump into the long stone basin before the house, there was no sound; nor was there any sign of life outside except for the cock and his attendant wives scratching on the yellow straw of the dung-heap.

Marta went up the steps and passed out of the still sunlight into the half-darkness of the narrow passage which transected the house; at its far end she could see through the open back door the long grass of her father's orchard. She hesitated for a second, her hand on the iron handle of the sitting-room door. Inside,

she could hear the subdued rustling of heavy skirts, the muted conversational tones of a Sunday afternoon call, although it was not Sunday. 'Such a fuss,' she thought, and with an impatient, half-defiant movement turned the handle.

The sun through the two windows, shining across the illuminated outspread leaves of the potted geraniums, and their rounded clusters of bloom, was in her eyes. She took her time closing the door, trying to see who was there. The two aunts naturally, and godmother, and *Schwester*. She could see against the sunlight the quiet profile of the district nurse, her starched cap falling just clear of her shoulders in symmetrical folds of stiff muslin against whose gossamer the sun picked out the fine cross threads. She was glad *Schwester* had come.

They greeted her in restrained, expectant voices, each with some little added phrase of goodwill. Aunt Lydia's voice was faintly disapproving—'Such a fine blouse for travelling?' Aunt Berta was placidly cheering—'Such a fine day, at least.' Godmother was stately and benign—'So you are setting out into the world, Marta!' Aunt Lydia and Aunt Berta were her mother's sisters, Aunt Lydia the younger, a plump, flaccid little woman, with the plaintive voice and drooping lips of the once-spoilt child; Aunt Berta the elder, tall and thin with a round button face made to look rounder and smaller by the drawing up of all her thin hair into a bun on top, by the round bird-like bright eyes, the round, shining tip of the small nose, the round red cheeks, the curved, contented smile always on the small mouth. Godmother was her father's sister and widow of the last head-master of the village school. Less tall than Aunt Berta, she looked taller; a stately figure in her black serge skirts, her black cotton blouse with its severe parallel lines of hand-sewn tucks and discreet jet buttons, three by three, down the middle pleat. She wore a gold watch attached to her bosom by an ornamental bow in

the same metal. The features of Aunt Lydia were lost in loose, wrinkled white flesh; Aunt Berta had never had any real features. But Godmother had the high-bridged, determined nose, the straight eyebrows, the firm lips and spare, out-jutting chin of a lady of authority. Her intelligent grey eyes shone with directed benevolence.

*Schwester's* greeting was submerged in that of the others, but her smiling brown eyes rested on Marta as on a daughter. She had brought her into the world.

The long table which ran between the door and the window was covered with its white Sunday cloth. Thin white porcelain cups with plates to match were ranged in order upon it, a plate of cut bread and butter, two plates of small cakes, dark purple bilberry jam in a glass jar. At the upright piano Trudi was sitting, a book of music with large printed notes open before her. Her glossy hair was drawn into one stout plait reaching to her waist and tied with her Sunday bows of black watered silk two inches from the end and at the base of the skull. She was wearing her blue-spotted pinafore with frilled shoulders and white binding round the yoke. Trudi's hands were on the keys, but she turned on the music-stool as Marta came in.

Now Godmother said, 'Trudi was going to play to us. Begin, child.'

Let Trudi play, Marta was thinking. It would bridge the gap in time. Then mother would come in with coffee from the kitchen, and Susi and Grete would come down—she could hear their feet in the room above—and Rudi perhaps. Then they would have coffee, and that would make something to do until she had to go down to catch the post-wagon. The clock between the two windows above the photograph of Pilatus by Moonlight showed a quarter to four.

Trudi played Mendelssohn's Spring Song rather slowly. 'What was it?' asked Aunt Lydia when she had finished.

'Spring Song by Mendelssohn,' said Trudi.

It was the Spring Song by Mendelssohn. The four older women nodded. Of course. The Spring Song. . . .

A scuffling at the door handle heralded Susi and Grete. Susi came in first, propelled from behind by a firm hand in the small of the back. She was the afterthought, six years old, with a mop of yellow curls surmounted by a red bow. Her chubby face shone with recent friction and her frilled red and white pinafore exhaled the faint hot-linen odour of Sunday cleanliness. Grete was Trudi's twin, fifteen a week before, with the same fresh white skin and large features, and the same glossy plait; but the bows in it were of white watered silk to distinguish her from her twin.

Susi took instant possession of the room, running to Aunt Lydia, coyly permitting herself to be wheedled thence to Aunt Berta and lastly to *Schwester*. She knew from experience that it was a waste to play up to the other aunt—not Godmother to her.

Grete cast a responsible eye over the table and straightened a plate, then slipped out into the kitchen. Presently she came back with the huge metal can of coffee supported in both hands. The door, swung open by her out-thrust elbow, did not swing to again. Marta saw the edge of the grey skirt pushed against it and moved over to hold it open. Mother came in with a tray in both hands: another cake, biscuits and the milk-jug. Trudi shut the piano. The room was suddenly very full of the women moving in their big skirts. Mother took the foot of the table, Trudi and Grete sidled themselves on to the bench against the wall.

'Where's Rudi?' asked Marta.

'Ach, I don't know.' Mother was always irritable when she was upset.

'Sit still, Susi,' she said sharply, and Susi, with a look of self-conscious dismay, subsided, wriggling at her place on the long bench between the table and the wall. She had opened her mouth to make a belated protest



when she saw her mother's hands clasped one upon the other and recognized that the time for protest was over.

Everyone looked down at the table-cloth while Mother said grace in her grave, careful voice, the schoolgirl's voice of long ago which she kept for high German.

As she prayed Marta lifted her eyes towards her. She noticed with the same inexpressible tension of heart which she had felt coming down the road, the knotted outline of the work-coarsened hands, with their long fingers and determined, outward curving thumbs, the swollen joints of the wrists beneath the grey sleeves. Imperceptibly her eye travelled upwards to the bowed head in those passive moments so impressive. The fine-lipped, determined, rather hard mouth closed for a second in tranquillity after the Amen; Mother had a beautiful mouth. When Mother was like this, still and quiet, with clasped hands, Marta felt inarticulate guilt and admiration and pity. Mother was by nature so stirring, so busy about everything in the house, so impatient and so tired. Father's was the quiet nature, like Marta's; she knew that she loved him the more, and sometimes felt regret and shame that it was so. If Mother would not tire herself so. . . . She could not help thinking of the passage in the Bible, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful about many things.' But her mother was Marie and she was Marta. It was the wrong way about.

The women and girls raised their bowed heads. Mother began to pour out the coffee, Trudi to circulate the food. Mother reached for the bilberry jam and covered a richly-buttered sippet of bread with it. 'Come,' she said to Susi, who craned forward with wide-open mouth, and took it at a gulp. Mother watched her chew it up, and wiped the smear of bilberry juice from her chin with the back of her index finger. It was the tacit sign that she had been unnecessarily sharp.

'Are you not afraid to go all that way alone?' asked



Aunt Lydia, her plaintive quaver making the journey sound even further.

Marta felt angry. Her feelings were not Aunt Lydia's business. 'It is life,' she said. Godmother nodded in agreement. Aunt Berta smiled vacant encouragement and said with approval: 'She is a good girl. She doesn't complain.'

Mother made an impatient gesture. 'What is there to complain of?' she asked, her voice on edge. She would not think of the six empty months during which Marta would be in a foreign land, nor of the time afterwards, when she would only see her daughter for short holidays. She would be at Lausanne, or Vevey, or one of the mountain places, an independent young lady making her way in the hotel business. 'It was life. Marta was grown up. She began to jam another morsel for Susi.'

Trudi said, 'I wish I were going to London.' Grete stopped the rest of the sentence, if any had been intended.

'You,' she mocked, sticking out her lips, 'you aren't contented with anything. You want to go to Paris and Berlin, yes, and America. Yes, she does,' Grete apostrophised the table. 'But I don't. I shall be quite content to stay here at home all my life. Haven't we the sun and air, and the snow in winter and sleighing just as good as at St. Moritz, where all the tourists are?'

These half-serious differences of opinion between the twins were a family tradition. Everyone began to join in. Did Trudi really want to go to America? Wouldn't she be afraid of the sea? It was a teasing, good-natured, simple coffee-table talk; only Marta saw the faint, quivering of Trudi's upper lip, the misting of her fine dark eyes, with their far-away look.

The room seemed oppressively hot. Marta stirred uneasily and wondered whether Aunt Lydia was right about the foolishness of wearing the new blouse. She sipped her coffee and crumbled at a piece of cake. She felt stifled by the surrounding air, by something rising

inside her bosom into her throat, choking her. She was sitting here to-day, *now*, at the family table. Where would she be this time to-morrow, the next day, in a week? Mother, Trudi, Grete, Susi, Aunt Lydia, Aunt Berta, Godmother . . . they would be here together in the village, doing the familiar things, seeing the familiar sights. The apples and plums would swell in the orchard, the potatoes would be lifted, the cows put out to pasture and brought in. They would sit on Sunday in the whitewashed church, the men to the left, the women to the right, the unconfirmed children together in front, and hear Herr Pfarrer stammer through a sermon. Afterwards the families would cluster for a few moments in the churchyard, each about its most recent grave. While she would be praying somewhere far off, in what new, strange church and living among what unimaginable people.

She pushed back her chair, pretending to have noticed the clock. 'I have one or two things to put in,' she explained, and left the room.

Since she was fifteen Marta had had the small room at the top of the narrow stairs to herself. It looked out southwards, over the wire-enclosed chicken run, down to the valley. The haze still hung over the hills. She stood for a second in the window, wishing that she could see the mountains. Above her the pigeons cooed throatily on the bar across the narrow gable end. She saw Schusters' Fritzzi toddle out of his parents' cottage, fill a small jug at their pump, and toddle in again. He went up the two steps of their small house one foot at a time, clutching his burden in both hands.

She turned from the window to the small, neat room, her own, which she would not sleep in again for so many months. Between the bed with its billowing feather pillows and the dressing-table with its white crochet cover there was just room for her to stand. The walls were of unvarnished wood patterned with their own irregular knots. There was a chest of drawers

and a cupboard and in one corner a stove of green faience with the death of Winkelried not so big or in such high relief as at the *Pfarrhaus*. Over the bed hung a watercolour painting of the castle of Chillon.

All her personal things had already gone. The room did not seem to belong to her any more. The china pin-tray from the dressing-table, the hair tidy, the pair of glass vases had all been put away. The prayer and hymn-books from the bedside table and the calendar, with a message for every day, Godmother's annual present, were in the big luggage which had been taken yesterday and registered right through to London. By the door stood her black portmanteau, shining in the sunlight, strapped up in its yellow straps, packed ready.

Her handbag lay on the dressing-table, its contents already checked and sorted—clean handkerchief, eau-de-cologne, purse, note-case, with Swiss, French and English money, tickets, and passport.

Neither of these things seemed to belong to her; they were like strangers, hostile and forbidding.

She looked in the large mirror, tilting it with her hand. The hair tidy had been so wedged as to give it the right angle, but now the hair tidy was gone. Even the mirror had ceased to be personally hers.

From the room below she heard singing and the thump, thump of the piano. 'Rufst du mein Vaterland' she heard, rhythmic, solemn, each note stamped out separately. She let the mirror swing back. She put on her hat and ran the two hatpins into it without another look. She put on her black coat, picked up bag and portmanteau and began to descend the stairs. When she opened the sitting-room door Trudi was at the piano, bent a little forward, playing with strained, over-emphatic fingers. The others sat round, their chairs pushed back from the table, Susi on Grete's knee; they were singing, slowly and seriously in unison. They did not look up as she came in. She stood in the door, her travelling things in her hands, and joined in.

The solemn notes swelled her bosom as she sang, putting her head back and breathing carefully as she had been taught at school. She had a rich, fine voice, resonant, true and a little harsh. These were the voices women had in the valley; as they grew older the resonance increased and the tuneful richness lessened. Godmother's voice was more like a stringed instrument than a woman's voice; it had the harshness of the zither.

'*Rufst du mein Vaterland. . .*' Marta's eyes were lifted to the coloured picture of a castle high on a rocky summit which hung above the piano. Under it was written '*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. . .*' The ideas mingled in her mind; the strong fortress, the high mountains, the green forests, those occasional shaggy ruins left from an age of tyranny so long forgotten . . . Luther's hymn, the tense, unswerving Christian faith of the *Reformierten*. Her voice thickened with the choking sensation in her throat, then, as she made an effort to control, cleared again. 'A . . . men,' they all sang, and silence fell suddenly.

Mother surreptitiously wiped the corner of her eye. Aunt Berta said in her light, cheerful voice, faintly touched with surprise and concern, 'Look there, Trudi's crying.' Trudi got up roughly from the piano stool and closed down the lid. 'I'm not,' she said.

But it was Rudi, bursting in, who broke the anxious silence. They had been so deep in their song they had not seen him through the window as he came up the road. He was in his working clothes and his huge boots clattered on the floor. He was seventeen, dark, round-faced, with big hands and feet. His face was very brown and he was smiling with the wide, enchanting smile which was like his father's.

'I ran,' he explained.

'Say good afternoon to our guests,' his mother said, a little sharply. He blinked round at them all, still dazzled from the sunshine outside. 'Good afternoon.

A send-off for Marta . . . ' He grinned. ' Like a princess.' They all laughed at the joke and Marta pretended irritation. ' Why, Rudi . . . I suppose you don't mind when I go.' His eyes crossed with hers. Neither brother nor sister said anything. Then she quickly drew on her gloves.

' Where's father ? ' she asked, not looking at anything except the smooth black kid which she was working and smoothing over her fingers.

Rudi said, ' He's on his way now.' He went over to Aunt Lydia and asked her something unimportant about her son. Walter was eighteen and there was talk of his going to Zurich to study. Aunt Lydia lamented querulously that it was a long way from home and she hardly knew anyone in Zurich.

Trudi ran out of the room suddenly.

Aunt Berta nodded her small neat head up and down several times. Her fixed smile had two expressions, vaguely sympathetic or blankly good-natured. Now it was soft, with a kind of understanding. ' She's upset,' said Aunt Berta.

Susi banged on the table with her teaspoon. Her chin was streaked purple with trickles of jam.

' Who wouldn't be upset ? ' said Grete with one of her unexpected impulsive outbursts, and quite suddenly broke into tears. Grete was like that: you could see the tragedy gathering in Trudi's eyes a long time before it happened, but Grete was all smiling and composed one moment and in a storm of wretchedness the next. It would be over like a thunder shower, Marta knew. By the evening the distress would be out of her and she would be walking about the place, laying the supper, singing and not thinking any more about Marta being gone. But Trudi would be cross and upset for days, with tears that came into her eyes and never quite spilled over.

' There, there, there,' said Aunt Berta, and Grete ran to her and buried her head on her shoulder. The

older woman rocked her gently to and fro. 'There, there,' she crooned, and added over her dark head to the room at large, 'so soft-hearted, *die Grete*.' She was Grete's godmother and unquestioningly regarded her as the most sensitive and intelligent of all her sister's fine children.

Godmother came over with her stately walk towards Marta. She said in her firm, well-articulated tones—tones which made the jovial patois of the valley sound like high German—'So you must leave us now, Marta. I have this book for you to read for every night. It is a beautiful book. You will be far from us, but we shall not forget you. The same God will watch over you there as here.'

'Here's father,' shouted Susi, jumping down from the bench and running out. They could hear her in the passage clamouring to be lifted up. When he came in she was on his shoulder, holding tightly by a handful of his greying hair.

Marta, looking at him, saw the social smile which altered without lighting up his features, saw the absent way in which he steadied the wriggling Susi on his shoulder. Oh, God, she whispered to herself, oh, God; it was a prayer without words. There were no words for the pain which had been growing in her ever since she left the *Pfarrhaus*. She was glad for the sense of strength which Godmother gave her, standing at her side, for the confident feel of the book which she had put in her hands wrapped in brown paper. She forgot that she had not said thank you.

Rudi had picked up her small portmanteau. Father greeted the company singly and said something a little longer to his sister. They were different, they understood each other.

Now her mother came forward, and she saw her father's eyes move from his sister's face, and a new look suffuse his features as he took his wife's arm in his and said:



‘The waggon will be at the post office in ten minutes. We had better take our Marta to meet it.’

Did these two understand each other? She would never know. Her mother seemed so impatient, so practical, so set upon the little things of every day, so far from her father’s noble dreams, so far from her own. But when they looked at each other like that, when they were close, arm linked in arm, silent in a common sorrow, she knew that they had something between them closer than all the bonds of sympathy that bind sister to brother, or father to daughter. They were indivisible, united, one flesh.

Rudi went out of the house ahead of them with the portmanteau, then the others, Grete mopping her eyes, Susi still high on her father’s shoulder so that he had to bend at each doorway, the aunts side by side, God-mother following with *Schwester*. Marta came last. She hesitated on the narrow threshold, swallowing back loneliness and terror. She was going now, out of her home, out of the village, out of the country, alone among strangers. She was going. She turned her head back to the dark passage of the little house, and saw Trudi watching from the foot of the stairs. For a moment the sisters clung in each other’s arms, their smooth, wet cheeks together.

“Good-bye, Marta. Good-bye. Oh, I wish . . . I wish . . .”

“Good-bye, Trudi.” They kissed and parted. Outside in the sunlight Marta, following the procession, wondered whether Trudi was crying because she was losing her sister or because she was not going to England herself.

## DUNSTAN THOMPSON

### IN ALL THE ARGOSY OF YOUR BRIGHT HAIR

WHOM I lay down for dead rises up in blood,  
Drawn over water after me. His wavering  
Footfall echoes from the ocean floor. Blow,  
Ye winds, a roundabout. These bully sailors flood  
My eyes with tears, treacheries. But his voice shivering  
North in lamentation is all I now know—  
Whose million miles, once worth gales to be glad,  
Tell me last look was best photograph I had.

When that damask duke took my heart for hound,  
I dogged him with praises, with poems, a beggar's  
homage.

His blue eyes, fencing like a dance of swords,  
Ringed me from foemen, were night lights. I found  
He turned my head from death's entrancing image,  
Gold in the desert sun, who sang 'What words  
You want, I have.' He saved me from my own hand  
And the five assassins nervous for the grandstand.

My whole life in gratitude does him no good.  
Whose happiness was dancebands, beer, and baseball,  
Talked love to be polite. But the soldier boy  
Grows up, goes after the goddess in the barbed-wire  
wood

Who sells him secrets for a firing squad. This tall  
Young man, this blond young man, his mother's joy,  
Must kill her first, his father next. He shall ride  
To the top of the hill where three thieves died.

The whores of Wardour Street, the Soho whores :  
'Give us a light, dearie.' But I have no match.  
Now the inconsolable year hazes with twilight,  
Only the cold phantasmal rose burns out-of-doors.  
Inside, the lamps are lit. If I should watch  
All autumn nights, I'd see no ghost. My light  
Fingered friend stole the world away. Imperilled heirs,  
You of the equal sadness, give him your prayers.

## WILLIAM SANSOM

### THE CLIFF

PODEVIN had finally parted from a love of many years, and guided by some sort of desperate wish for new horizons, for a breath of air, for detachment in fact—he had taken a journey to the seacoast.

It might be argued that now he was more attached than ever, for now he had memories to contend with; but to Podevin walking high up on a cliffpath it seemed that at last he could taste the feeling of freedom. If only during these moments of his walk indeed, for afterwards—he knew enough of life—he might well be enclosed in a great loneliness and then all his energies would be expended in the search among people and among things for a way out. But during these instants of echoing sea air and sweet-smelling brambles, of wide breezes and the coastline lying mapped far ahead—he felt the sense of freedom.

Dark clouds moved at a flying speed across the sky ahead—astonishing, for only a light breeze blew on the path—but such a thunderous pace and such dark riders suited the rockbound coast, they shadowed the sea so that it lay bleak and hard as slate, they drew from the silent cliffs some of the venom latent in their primeval stone. Then, far along the coastline, the sun shone, illuminating like a searchlight a distant headland of yellow corn. This startling projection of yellow nosed right out into the slate-dark sea. The searchlight travelled and lighted on two gull-rocks, bringing from them a similar yellow gleam, so that for a moment of comedy they became two female haystacks drawing shyly away to sea, away from the nosing of the yellow corn-mouse. But this happened in a land remote from the barren cliffs upon which Podevin walked. Such cliffs

as these could never smile, they were huge and desolate, precipitous to the sea, cragged, bouldered, with steep walls touched by no live thing but weeds and the ghostly gulls.

At frequent points the sea had bitten into these stone giants, small pebbled coves had formed, the cliffs had subsided—but ungraciously, clawing instantly round each erosion with sharp and predatory pincers of rock. Now Podevin arrived above one of these coves. He looked down. The path divided into two, one continuing along the top of the cliff, the other zig-zagging dizzily down the almost vertical descent to a small circular beach quite enclosed. His eyes focused on something white lying on the grey pebbles far beneath. Although it lay still, as still as the rocks themselves, his eye fixed upon it immediately, instantly alert—for it was a human body. Far below imprisoned at the bottom of this deep grey cylinder lay the little figure of a human being, a woman; she lay motionless, in a white bathing costume, asleep or waiting for the sun.

Podevin stood still. Just then the sun broke through again—but this time it cast its searchlight into the cove. The sea flashed blue, the grey stone boulders grew shadows and lived, and round the rocks below the shallow water gleamed with translucent green and purple. The girl's legs shone whitely as gulls' wings. Podevin took a step towards the path down into the cove.

No act is ever performed for one reason alone. One reason may predominate—but this is too easily annotated as the unique agent by minds that of their nature crave for simplification. But men and men's minds are not so simple as the creeds they evolve, men are much more cautious than this. Before any real decision is taken, every concomitant ingredient of the moment, every possibility of profit and loss is weighed and measured instantaneously by the mechanism of past influence and future desire; man moves only according to the answer he records, adjusted or maladjusted, right or wrong.

And just so in Podevin's walk many influences were at work—the cove appeared, the girl, the fortuitous sunlight. The sea air had freshened his lungs. The smell of wild flowers, simple and erotic, was blown at him and mixed itself with the virility of the salt air. He was free; he felt therefore capable. Momentarily a sense of guilt came to repress him, and then was lifted, adding thus by its released check to the impetus of freedom. Quite by chance, and despite the fact that he travelled alone, he had been given a double room in his lodging house—this he now remembered vividly. And perhaps he was moved most of all—here is the influence that must be presumed dominant—by the recession of what had only some hours before seemed the deepest sorrow of his life.

In the train his throat had been choked, he had kept his eyes strained on his book fearful that someone might talk to him. Only once throughout the long journey he had risen—to give his seat to a nurse, whose thanks he had then been unable to receive with grace, so that he had turned to stand in the corridor, never daring throughout the journey to look back into the carriage again. Later he had strolled hopelessly out on to the harbour quay; he found it barren, but knew how much beauty they together would have found. He wished, how he wished for her! He saw only her image as he most admired her—all the uglinesses that had frustrated him were unexpectedly forgotten. His regret had grown unbearable. He had even returned to the station and had bought a ticket, intending suddenly to return. But there had been no train. He had decided to climb out of this village of blank faces, to walk alone on the cliff.

Self-pity overwhelmed him, overwhelmed poor Poddy as he suddenly saw himself, as he imagined old friends might talk of him, poor Poddy the lonely ego of his mother's choice, Poddy he had seen in mirrors, long-nosed Poddy who seemed never more than a passenger, his only anchors certain intimate habits—Poddy never



wearing a vest winter or summer, Poddy who liked very much the crisp knuckle at the end of the joint. Poddy of certain past achievements, too, standing out from the past as though he had been photographed—Poddy who had worn a white suit once at a regatta somewhere, Poddy who had played a shuffling game with his woman shussssing the autumn leaves over a gravel path. Poddy secretive and smelling of chlorine in the locked cubicle of a swimming bath.

Now—magically it seemed—this ‘poor Poddy’ could scarcely be recollected. Podevin had grown strong again, over-strong. He took the first step towards the path, then paused a moment longer, assessing quickly whether his intrusion upon the girl’s solitude might not appear too obvious—and then this last diffidence was rejected and he was clambering fast down the path to the cove. His momentum increased, he felt that nothing now was beyond his power. The exhilaration of a swift descent to level land gripped him—the dangerous heights were left behind, the ground approached where men’s feet trod securely. Podevin felt the stretch of his diaphragm and the alert poise of his whole able body as he leapt running down the path. . . .

At the bottom the beach was shielded by a high ridge of rocks. There the grass straggled on to a preliminary drift of white and grey pebbles; but to arrive at the beach proper it was necessary to circumvent the rock-screen and pass through a narrow alley close against the perpendicular cliff itself; otherwise out by the sea, over wet and slippery rocks, pools and brown weed left bare by the low tide. Podevin hesitated. The girl was hidden from him. What would he say?

But he was beyond policy, he was breathing hard and only thought: ‘Say anything, and be damned.’ He kicked the twisted white raffia of a dried-up root and sent it circling like a spider down the pebbles. ‘And damn that, too. Damn the whole damned world.’ He looked round at the rocks with contempt.

Then, as he started towards the alley between the rocks and the cliff-wall, he looked up. For the first time he noticed the full weight of the cliff looming over him. Above its dizzying skyline the clouds raced, driving inland, so for a moment it seemed that the cliff moved, gradually pivoting over its huge mass on to the beach and on to Podevin in particular. At once he felt that he was threatened. He said upwards to the cliff, aloud: 'And damn you, too.'

He regretted this instantly. He stepped on towards the cliff, further beneath it. Now his foot trod tenderly, as though it wished to tread in silence, and his eyes were still raised to the cliff-top—he was forced to keep a watch on it. He stopped, carefully took a step backwards. His mind repeated thunderously: 'I didn't mean that. I didn't mean to say it . . . you knew that all the time, you did really?'

He stared up at the cliff, fascinated by a sudden obtrusion of all its detail, each layer of slate, each projecting ledge, each clump of weed. His eyes travelled slowly up the giant primeval ruin, from its slate-packed base up the mass of wall to the skyline with huge boulders frozen into dangerous miniature—and all this time his mind repeatedly addressed some shapeless omniscient power, something vaguely personable, for he called it 'you.' It might have been a personality implicit in the cliff itself, something asleep since the beginning; or perhaps the shapeless god-creation always in control of him and now ready to use the cliff as an immediate weapon against even so slight a hint of presumption on Podevin's part; or it might have been the personification of his own guilt. He wondered, secretly—and while he welcomed with an almost joyful sense of sacrifice the first two possibilities, he grew angry at the suggestion of his own guilt. For a moment his bravado rose and he cursed again. But a little bird, a little black swift, flew from somewhere and darted with perilous decision to a point half-way up the cliff-face. This bird, so small

yet so sure of its flight, assumed the half-truth of an echo. It became giddy, too quick for the human grasp. It darted like a fly about the immense cliffside, drifting and swooping anywhere, drawing a vanishing black line about the high dangers, describing the height and in its rise and fall bearing Podevin with it. His fear took hold of him again—the bird had drawn his attention to the integral danger, to the centre of the cliff. For there in the centre height and weight lay above and below without retreat. There the greatest weight was massed, there Podevin imagined himself clinging in despair, unable to climb higher, dreading to take a step down. The sensation of climbing against this monster could not be separated from a fear of being crushed by it.

Podevin suddenly began to tremble, he grew acutely afraid. Perhaps this was even a desirous fear, perhaps he wished in some spirit of love for his own destruction to give himself to the resident above; or perhaps in the presence of such elemental power his normal values of measurement were unsteadied, he was giddied, his human perspectives had been suddenly dispersed—so that he seemed to leave the earth for the rock yet remained small on the earth, he was carried up on the fleshless echo yet shuddered still in his vulnerable flesh beneath, with small eyes overwhelmed by such vast surfaces and his brain stripped of its defences by the old omniscience high over him.

Yet in another and secret compartment of his mind there ticked over the knowledge of the girl lying beyond the rock, of the bulge in his pocket of a packet of everyday cigarettes, of the normal lapping of the sea behind. This background of reality mixed with his stronger fear despised such fear for a foolish fancy. But nothing just then could decide whether the fancy was really no less real than what had always seemed his real body.

Nevertheless—as the sharp little bird darted high up, as the wind blew on the cliff-face, as the small waves rustled behind, as a few flies buzzed in the sunlight about

the carcass of a crab—nevertheless Podevin again advanced, still with great care, still holding with his brain a wild conversation in which repeatedly the same questions were posed and the same answers given, ceaselessly as a noiseless singing that echoed louder within his ears at each step forward, as his ears stretched alertly for sounds of danger. He kept telling himself that the cliff had never fallen in hundreds of years, he produced for himself proof of this in the sea-washed smoothness of each boulder on the beach—their sharpness had long been washed away. His brain pointed out to him that there were no sharp stones. . . .

‘But,’ came the answer instantly, ‘This might yet be the one moment, the one moment in a thousand years!’

. . . Ridiculous! It’s a risk that anyone must take—really, Podevin! . . .

‘But haven’t you read of rock falls, just as may happen here, a line in a paper, no more, no tale of tragedy and awe, just a line about a death?’

Instantly he answered himself. . . . Yes, but how often do such lines occur? Seldom, seldom, once in so many years and then to a millionth part of a people. *Not to me. . . .*

‘What was that?’

. . . Not to me. . . .

‘Not to you, eh? Who on earth are you, then, to put yourself outside the management of fate? Who are you to presume in this kind of way—answer, go on, say——’

. . . Well, perhaps. . . .

‘Go on, go on?——’

. . . Well, perhaps I didn’t quite mean that—the way you put it—not that at all. . . .

Whatever lay above had plainly heard him! He knew it had heard him! But—how could he be sure that it might not have understood, that it might not have taken his tentative argument for some more deliberate self-assertion? If the power thought itself

flaunted—it would be tempted to act! But then again he bit his tongue and apologised within himself immediately for attributing to the omniscience such a weakness of temptation.

And all the while the ringing in his ears grew louder. Yet still he walked forward. He felt now the flesh all over his body to be transparent, stripped and sensitive. He wanted to run, but feared to disturb the stones, feared to make provocative sounds, any sound that might be misconstrued as forceful and presumptuous. Outwardly walking, yet running inside himself, with veins alert and peppering, Podevin came beneath the shadow of the cliff and into the narrow passage.

The rock exhaled a chill dampness. A salty bush grew a few feet above his head and from this there dripped water from a slow spring. The water ran along a ledge, formed into drops, then dripped ceaselessly, colouring the slate with wet red iron. The ledge was moulded above his head, hanging over with a cave-like moisture. But the opposite wall of the alley was of smooth sea-washed stone, basined inwards by the wash of clean high tides, immaculate as the hide of a grey fish. Such an erosion emphasized the years; it told Podevin plainly that all the years were no more than a minute to the rock. The pebbles rolled under his shoes, ringing hollow and too loud. He walked faster. He wanted fearfully to run. He had to grip himself hard. The passage seemed to grow dark. Or his eyes were closing? . . . And then he felt the cliff move.

He threw himself into a run. He could hear already the rumbling thunder of rock descending. The force within the cliff had woken. Angrily, feeling Podevin's passing, resenting his immodest assertions. Now it breathed once a dreadful silent breath before subsiding hard on him.

Podevin panicked out into the sunlight. He stumbled out on to dazzling white pebbles. He stood panting in the round daylight safety of the cove.

The girl lay ahead of him. He saw that she was naked. A long tentacle of brown oiled seawrack had caught its frills in her hair. She was dead, washed up by the tide.

He stared, desperately trying to realise this fact of death, trying to translate the reality lying to sun before him. But he could only see the body as part of the cliff's design, part of some ancient conspiracy of the sea and its rock. The sea was not blue then—but dark, green, deep and monstrous as stone. The white body had been cast down as a bait for him, a cold lure deposited by the coastline—for Poddy who had broken with the demands of the past, for Poddy in his high-blown independence jaunting with the freedom of the cliff.

He began to run down the beach. He ran past the body not daring to touch it. The pebbles ran with him, following him, echoing up the cove. He ran towards the sea, to a range of rocks not yet submerged that offered a path out and round into somewhere else. He leapt on to these rocks, slithering on the thick weed that grew over them, losing his foothold, falling, stumbling into deep pools, cutting his ankles in sharp pockets, bruising his hands as he clutched for support. His brain pounded with hate for the sea. The blue sea! The devouring shapeless sea with its evil swell, its monstrous depth, its wintry breakage of wooden boats, its cruel rocks, its drawing of bodies in such cold and nerveless draught, its vertiginous flatness sparkling and deceiving, its roots of oil and the furred and shelled beasts that preyed slowly on its bed, all of its wrack and wreck and rotting cold embrace and the tides that day after day, age after age, crawled up the beaches and then left them, desiring all but never needing, breaking uselessly and ceaselessly at the earth and at man.

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There this account of Podevin's afternoon might have ended, but for what seemed to be a chance event. Had this never happened, Podevin might well have rounded



the rocks into the neighbouring cove and climbed the next path to the clifftop, bearing with him his terror, his guilt, and a memory that would perhaps have shadowed the rest of his years.

But instead, a dead fish barred his path over the rocks. A dead fish with its gullet torn open and a red salivary tread trailing on to the rock. The sight shocked his mind back to the intimacy of blood. He stumbled, caught his foot in a rock hole and suddenly felt the pain—a moment before he had cut the same ankle and felt nothing.

He paused, looking at the fish, while the day around him seemed to grow lighter. Distance occurred to either side. A moment before the world had been wrapped tightly over him, as if he had been running in a tight sphere of daylight compressed by a terrible weight of shadowed fears. Like a headache lifting, the weight of fear lightened, he could feel himself again standing on ground, in boots that he knew, with space and smells around him. Whether the fish was the cause of this return to earth, or whether in any case he was due to return and the fish merely provided the most immediate agency—that cannot exactly be known. But in effect the return was made and Podevin bent down to rub his bruised ankle.

Instantly he remembered the girl in the cove. Perhaps she had not been quite dead! Perhaps he could have done something to save her! A few turns of some respiratory exercise. . . . Podevin turned and clambered back towards the cove.

The girl had gone. He looked quickly at the wet marks of the incoming tide, but these still ringed the beach low down. And the strand of brown frilled weed lay alone high up on the pebbles. Then he caught sight of an arm moving. It seemed to wave from behind one of the boulders, and then disappeared. A silk vest was thrown momentarily into the air. This too disappeared.

## DONALD BAIN

### POEM

LIGHT the gentle candle  
In the hollow of your breasts  
Slowly turn the handle  
Of the acquiescent door  
Forget the air-raid warning,  
The dust upon the floor.  
Forget until the morning  
The weariness of war.

We have known only parting and the hollow ache  
Of sad good-byes and hurried rendezvous.  
Flat like a tapestry has been our time  
Shadows reflected on our private lake;  
Since the first autumn when you came  
Dark and intangible across the lawn  
Our love has been too often stilted, lame,  
Finding equations that it could not solve.  
But thoughts like a circus wheel revolve  
And meet in each companionable dawn.

Turn your illuminated wrist  
And let it softly lie  
Let my hollow fingers twist  
The fringes of your hair  
Close your eyelid on your eye  
Shut out the nervous light  
Consider that before the day  
Stretch all the hours of night.

Remember the telegram that never came;  
The ominous and long-awaited letter.  
Breakfasts in summer which seem all the same  
When you look back across the empty stage.

We loved unkempt because we knew no better  
Cabined in our confidence and age,  
Remote, intent on private heresy  
Unwary of the strange conspiracy  
We never noticed when the tumbrils passed.

Let me turn the pillow  
To the supple willow  
Of your sun enchanted back.  
Let the plaster fall  
From the falling wall ;  
The alarm is wound and set  
But daylight is not yet.

The late sun of an empty afternoon  
Flecked the dust covers of the drawing-room,  
Pictures and boxes, the remote debris  
Of sudden and unwarranted dismay  
Lay eloquent of parting underneath the plaster  
By the boule table, the porcelain display  
I was aware of our fragile first disaster,  
I was alone and you had gone away,—  
By the boule table, the porcelain display.

Let your eyelash brush  
The stubble of my cheek  
There for a moment only  
Is privacy we seek.  
To-morrow will be lonely,  
So ask to-morrow's pardon  
In the garden of to-night.

We in our letters lived and dreamt again  
Of old romance with appetite renewed  
By absence, and cessation of the pain  
That came with close communion of desire.  
I in the cathedral fashioned fantasy  
You in the village were again yourself.

Each in our separate winter watched the coals  
Make mirrors of imaginative fire  
Enforce the magnet of our distant poles.

It does not matter now  
How obvious we are,  
The poker game is over  
The Door is not ajar.  
Now we can discover  
Without embarrassment  
Our private element.

But when we met, fleeting and frowned upon  
By the Victorian statue, in the park,  
On a nostalgic platform, where the dark  
Concealed our clumsiness, the joy was gone  
That made imagination leap and flare.  
Instead misunderstanding and reproach  
Closed shutters in our brains—made us aware  
Of secret faults and hidden crookedness.  
But every parting brought the old despair.

Fold closer in my arms  
Now that the outside cold  
Increases in alarms.  
Our love is not so old  
That it cannot increase  
But every hour confirms  
Its fantasy and ease.

And now beside this other seaside town  
Above the antiques and the bric-a-brac  
We can discuss how our refrain has grown  
From scribbled notes to full concerted range:  
And when we walk down to the sea and back  
Along the straight streets and ruined promenade  
It seems unearned, and wonderfully strange  
That I can watch the rain beat down the sand  
And recognise at last your gentle hand.

## WILLIAM PLOMER

### A WEDDING GUEST

‘THE day after to-morrow,’ said Madam Cardoon, ‘I’m goin’ to a weddin’.’

‘Something special?’ said her late husband’s nephew, who knew she had some classy friends.

Her only reply was a twisted, mocking smile, and she turned to draw back the black-out curtains in order to inspect the weather. It was a morning in January, 1945, and the nephew-by-marriage, on belated Christmas leave, was spending a couple of days with his aunt. The relation between them was simple. She was a lonely old woman and liked to mother him, a process to which he had no objection. Besides, she fascinated him, for she was unlike anybody he had ever known: she seemed to live almost entirely in the past, a fantastic past that was reflected in her manner and appearance, her style and setting.

Juliet Cardoon lived in an ‘upper part,’ consisting of two floors over a junk-shop in a byway of Bayswater: she was much impoverished. The narrow, plain-fronted, brick house had not originally had a shop on the ground floor: it had been built in the eighteenth century, probably by some successful small tradesman who wished to live out in the country but within easy reach of London. No doubt it stood then in an acre or two of its own, but now it was all hemmed in with heavy, decayed Victorian houses and small shops, except at the back, where a noisy garage had been reduced to silence and ashes by incendiary bombs. Some of Madam Cardoon’s windows had been blasted, and from time to time pieces of plaster fell from the ceiling into her hair or her soup.

The rooms were not large, but they were neatly proportioned and lined with their original panelling, from which their occupant had long ago had layers of wall-paper stripped in order that the old wood might be seen and touched. It was characteristic of her to have found these rooms and to be living in them. Although she had some good pieces of furniture and some rare and even beautiful stuffs, glass and china, this constricted abode had to contain the accumulated surviving belongings of an acquisitive woman who had formerly been used to much more space and many more possessions, a woman who could never bear to throw anything away, believing that everything may 'come in useful' some time, and who was governed by a sort of fetishism in regard to material objects. In short, the rooms were overcrowded and had evidently been like this for a long time. There were too many draperies, too many photographs, and too many oddments, especially on the mantelpiece—a jade cup to hold spills, two precious fans, a brass cow studded with turquoises, a row of netsukés, a Persian bowl filled with pot-pourri, and a cloisonné incense-burner now used as a receptacle for buttons. Each of these objects, if touched by a visitor, was apt to start its owner off on a long train of reminiscences, and each seemed to contribute something to the peculiar faded odour of this boudoir-like den, an indefinable, faintly disturbing, but not disagreeable odour, as of some stale sweetish fungus. And about Aunt Juliet herself there was wafted also a cognate aroma, as of an old sachet in a box of subfusc clothes, long unopened: one never saw a moth or even a fly in this establishment.

It seemed fitting that Aunt Juliet herself should tinkle as she moved, with amulets on a bangle, and a pendant knocking against a brooch, and that she should tend to wear collars of old lace or panels of old brocade which had nothing to do with fashion, but which certainly had a style of their own, or rather her own; and all these



things went with her straight back ; her fluffed-out, indestructible-looking grey hair ; her eyes, into the faded blue irises of which, with oncoming age, a milky fluid seemed to have seeped ; her evidently tight stays ; the long, pointed toes of her shoes, dark bronze in colour and ornamented with paste buckles ; her somewhat stately deportment ; and her antique habit of saying 'comin'' and 'goin'.'

Juliet Cardoon was not in the least self-critical or introspective, so she had no compunction about her attachment to the past. The past had interested her, excited her, made her, and she did not choose to part with it or feel any compulsion to try and adapt herself to the present. The war-time silence of the streets was a positive joy to her : it would have been a greater joy if broken occasionally by the clop-clop of horses' hooves. Bombs and all that sort of thing had merely acted as a fixative : she had been frightened, certainly, but it had never occurred to her to take shelter or to mind being alone in the house. 'If I'm goin' to be blown up,' she used to say, 'I'd rather be blown up comfortably in me bed.' She was the kind of woman who, if burnt at the stake, would have found time to remark that she had always thought there was nothin' to beat a real cracklin' log-fire.

Although her nephew was not a very articulate young man and had only the vaguest sense of period, he could appreciate to some extent the glamour of his aunt's past. He understood that it had been linked with high life in the days when high life really was high, that is to say, expensive, not open to all the world, and still marked by the remains of feudal grandeur. Her own origins were provincial and commonplace, but the comfortable evangelical home in which she grew up had seemed to her, from quite an early age, chiefly a place to escape from—not because she was unhappy, but because she was expansive. She was a clever, energetic child, with a *flair* for persons and things that were lively,

fashionable and what in those days was called 'fast'—things and persons more or less under a ban, at home, of disapproval. She was ambitious, and had ideas about making a career: she once horrified her father by saying she wished she could go on the stage. Opportunity did not knock at her door, but threw it open and snatched her out into the great world for which she longed, for when still very young she married a young London lawyer of great promise and useful connexions. Her sister Jenny, an almost equally vivacious being, married soon after a young but successful gynaecologist already in practice in Harley Street.

All four of them were social climbers, not in the narrow and purely snobbish sense, but because they all wanted to get on and be well off and to enjoy themselves and to be in what they would have called 'the swim.' They were well equipped for both the climb and the swim. Both men were able, personable and shrewd, and apart from their professional successes, their social talents and ambitions were adroitly reinforced and even surpassed by those of their wives. The society in which they climbed was chiefly that of the clients, rather than the professional associates, of the two husbands.

Now Juliet felt, quite early in her married life, that it would not be enough for her to give charming little dinners (a good cook, her husband used to insist, was the very foundation of all things), to dress smartly, to be playfully 'clever,' to know a little of everything that was going on in public and something of what was going on in private. No, she must launch out in some new direction, so that her name, and her husband's name, might be associated with some interesting activity, something up-to-date, modish, sought after. The way was clear, for she was childless, and she had a particular talent which she now resolved to turn to account. Juliet had always had an extreme interest in the chairs people sat on, the carpets their chairs stood on, the fireplaces

by which they warmed themselves, the lamps that lighted them, the curtains that framed the weather they looked out upon : even as a child she had been in the habit of planning the decoration of imaginary rooms and houses.

And so it happened that, at the turn of the century, she had succeeded in setting herself up as an interior decorator. She called herself Madam Cardoon, opened a combined office and showroom (which she called her *atelier*) in Davies Street, filled it with an assortment of choice old objects and startling new ones (some of them imported from Paris, Munich and Vienna), obtained the services of a capable young sissy of good family as manager, left the management of her own house to a housekeeper, and then set to work. An interview which she gave to a fashion journal and in which she spoke with more confidence than she actually felt (though that was not small) was seen by Mrs. X, at that time a 'great friend' of the Prince of Wales. Mrs. X, reading the interview, remembered having lately met Mrs. Cardoon at a garden party, remembered also a useful service performed for her by Mrs. Cardoon's husband when she wished to arrange a legal separation from Mr. X, and decided to get Mrs. Cardoon—or 'Madam Cardoon, Adviser on Decoration,' as she now called herself—to do up the house she had taken in Great Cumberland Place, and to do it up so effectively that women who saw it would be envious and men would be bewitched into seeing it as part of Mrs X's personality, like her clothes, her jewels, her scent, and her voice.

Juliet let herself go, and the drawing-room in Cumberland Place became a nine weeks' wonder. She painted the ceiling black, which was unheard of, and the floor white (so was that), and covered it with plain mauve rugs (their plainness, even more than their mauveness, was a startling novelty), and planted upon them a sofa so commodious that if Madame Récamier had been the Dionne Quintuplets she would have been quite at ease

upon it, and so comfortably upholstered that sharp tongues speculated on the uses to which it was likely to be put. Little more need be said about that room except that above a dull gold dado the walls were covered with a satin paper in which broad black stripes alternated with mauve stripes, both being sown with little white and gold hearts, and that a prodigious electrolier hung from the ceiling in a wealth of sinuosities representing nymphs apparently caught in a cataract of melting toffee which had congealed for ever: in the palm of each hand of each nymph was a socket, and in each socket was an electric light bulb. The rest of the house, as decorated by Madam Cardoon, is described in the pages of *Milady at Home* for the year in question; it is enough to say that the bathroom was the first in London to be entirely lined with looking-glass for it to be understood that Madam Cardoon was, as they say nowadays, on the up-and-up. Emulation is the sincerest form of envy, and the 'atelier' in Davies Street and the young man with the very tall collar and very narrow trousers soon had as much work as they could cope with. In brief, Madam Cardoon had made her name.

'You ought to write the story of your life,' the nephew-by-marriage had more than once said, after his aunt had been in a reminiscent mood. He was quite right; particularly as in the course of her career as a decorator Juliet Cardoon had sometimes found herself called in not merely to 'advise' socially eminent women about their new chintzes and wallpapers, but to listen to their confidences. They saw that she was young but they regarded her as already a woman of the world, and the fact that she was not, or rather had not been originally, a woman of precisely *their* world made them in a way more ready to confide in her: besides, she had charm, she listened with every appearance of sympathy, she had good sense, was discreet, never gossiped unkindly (it was noticed) about her other clients, and had

(what was more) a shoulder positively formed for weeping on—it had been saturated, quite early on, by a lonely duchess who thought she had been wronged and was glad to seize a chance of relaxing the tiresomely ‘brave’ smile with which she faced the world.

The transition from Edwardian splendours to the Bayswater hide-out was neither abrupt nor recent. First came the sudden death of Cardoon from heart-failure, then the revelation that he had made such ample provision for his two children by a mistress whose existence Juliet had not even suspected, that very little was left for Juliet herself. Juliet could have gone on with her ‘atelier’ and made a very good thing of it, but she had lost heart, so she sold out, took up Christian Science, put it down, and went to live with her sister Jenny for a time; then, after the first world war, she lapsed into Bayswater and a reclusive life.

‘No,’ she told her nephew, ‘I shan’t be writin’ any memoirs. If I put in only the pleasant things the book wouldn’t be true, and if I put in the truth it wouldn’t be pleasant. I’m not grumblin’, I’ve had a good life in some ways, better than most as far as I can see, and I’ve got me friends, and very old friends, some of ‘em—otherwise I shouldn’t be goin’ to this weddin’.’

And all the trinkets at her wrist rattled and tinkled as she made a vague, slightly helpless gesture—as if she were accepting the truth of some proverb—that it’s a long lane that has no turning, perhaps, but no—

‘Things aren’t always what they seem,’ she said, with such a strange emphasis that this trite remark had an almost startling effect. ‘I’ll tell you a story,’ she said, ‘but you mustn’t breathe a word of it to a soul. You promise? . . . Once upon a time, in the days when I took an interest in other people’s houses, I went to stay at a small country place belongin’ to Lord and Lady Crotchester. It was full of dreadful Victorian stuff (though I’m told people are collectin’ it nowadays) and they wanted it freshenin’ up a bit. I could see

that Connie Crotchester had somethin' on her mind, but I couldn't imagine what. She and her husband seemed to have all the luck—looks, health, money, position. But no, they wanted a child, and they couldn't bring it off, and she was haunted by a fear that her husband would get to hate her if she failed to present him with an heir. I asked her if she thought it was her fault or her husband's. She said she was sure it was hers, as there had been no want of tryin' on his part. I can see her now, wringin' her hands and turnin' her beautiful head away as she spoke. "Oh, nonsense," I said. But I asked her all the same why she didn't see a good doctor. She hadn't apparently thought of that. So I told her about me sister Jenny's husband. I said he was a gynæcologist, but that all sorts of people went to see him about their private troubles, men as well as women. So she said she'd think about it, so I said it was no good thinkin' about it, she'd better *do* somethin' about it. Well, she went to see him, and within a year she was the mother of a beautiful boy. . . . Now don't look so cynical, you wicked boy! Me brother-in-law wasn't that sort of man. In any case, he wouldn't have been such a fool as to jeopardise his professional standin', and he had his own children to think of. . . . I need hardly tell you that Connie Crotchester spoke very highly of him.

'A year or two later another couple, whom I didn't know, Sir Portland and Lady Place, were also troubled at bein' childless. In this case, I believe, there was no doubt that the fault (or shall we say disability?—it seems unkind to call it a fault) lay with the husband, but Sir Portland went to see me brother-in-law, and again a child was born—only one, a daughter, but still that was better than nothin' . . .

'Well, Jenny's dead, and her husband's dead, and as you've promised to keep this all to yourself, I'm goin' to tell you a consultin' room secret. When Jenny was a widow, I asked her, for I was dyin' of curiosity, how



these two miracles were done. The explanation was quite simple, but a bit startlin'. It was Raikes.'

Again the gesture, the tinkling bangle.

'Rakes?' said the bewildered nephew, curious but faintly embarrassed. 'What are they?'

'Raikes was a big, handsome young man with a heart of gold. He was their butler in Harley Street . . .'

'Gosh!' said the nephew.

'Now the funny thing is that the weddin' I'm goin' to next week is the weddin' of the young Lord Crotchester and Miss Place. Of course *they* don't know, and Raikes, himself doesn't know now—he was killed by a bomb, poor fellow, in '41.'

Again the twisted smile; and perhaps because there was something entirely shameless in it, the nephew, in an access of boyish *pudeur* or shyness, hid his face for a moment in his hands.

B. J. BROOKE

APRIL : ITALY, 1944

Now in these April evenings  
With soft and petalled airs,  
And the quick burst of thunder  
And sudden April rain  
And the guns behind the mountains  
Answering the thunder—  
Now in this insidious  
And soft green twilight,  
The spring resumes again  
Its sly, oblique offensive,  
Like the foreseen relapse  
Of a recurrent fever :  
Disturbing the designed  
And static winter living  
With the wild narcissus  
And limbs bared to sunlight,  
The soldier in shirt-sleeve order  
And blossoming almond ;  
In scrubbed and naked billet—  
Washed and lax after working—  
I feel again the soft  
And ambushed airs caressing  
The limbs reborn for loving  
And rude athletic living ;  
Or walking at noonday  
In the still and formal landscape,  
Talking with the country people,  
Observing the growth of flowers,  
I feel the winter mind  
Like the sodden pastures, stirred  
By tulip and grape-hyacinth—  
The bright and alien flowers

Which in this northern seeming  
And Gothic land belie  
The stranger's dream of home—  
Lacking the will to resist  
The season's bland offensive :  
Hearing the rumour of thunder  
And guns beyond the mountains—  
A swaddie contented  
In a cushy unit, sweating  
On a home-posting, but glad  
Of this kind and smiling country  
And the sexual flowers,  
The men like trees walking  
In the haunted sunset hours,  
And the friendly houses under  
The olive-terraced hill,  
With the wine and easy talking  
In the darkening, still  
Evenings haunted by thunder.

# HAMISH HENDERSON

## HALFAYA

(For Luigi Castigliano)

At dawn, under the concise razor-edge  
of the escarpment, the laager sleeps. No petrol fires yet  
blow flame for brew-up. Up on the pass a sentry  
inhales his Nazionale. Horse-shoe curve of the bay  
grows visible beneath him. He smokes and yawns.  
Ooo-augh.

and the limitless  
shabby lion-pelt of the desert completes and rounds  
his limitless ennui.

At dawn in the gathering impetus of day, the laager  
sleeps.

Some restless princes dream : first light denies them  
the luxury of nothing. But others their mates more  
lucky

drown in the lightless grottoes. (Companionable death  
has lent them his ease for a moment).

The dreamers remember  
a departure like a migration. They recall a landscape  
associated with warmth and veils and pantomine  
but never focused exactly. The flopping curtain  
reveals scene-shifters running with freshly painted  
incongruous sets. Here childhood's prairie garden  
looms like a pampas, where grown-ups stalk (gross out-  
laws)

on legs of tree-trunk : recedes : and the strepitant  
jungle

dwindles to scruff of shrubs on a docile common,  
all but real for a moment, then gone.

The sleepers turn  
gone but still no nothing laves them.

O misery, desire, desire, tautening cords of the bedrack!  
Eros, in the teeth of Yahveh and his tight-lipped sect  
confound the deniers of their youth! Let war lie  
wounded!

Eros, grant forgiveness and release  
and return—against which they erect it,  
the cairn of patience. *No, dear, won't be long now  
keep fingers crossed, chin up, keep smiling darling  
be seeing you soon*

On the horizon fires fluff now,  
further than they seem.

Sollum and Halfaya  
a while yet before we leave you in quiet  
and our needle swings north.

The sleepers toss  
and turn before waking: they feel through their blankets  
the cold of the malevolent bomb-thumped desert,  
impartial  
hostile to both.

The laager is one.

Friends and enemies, haters and lovers  
both sleep and dream.



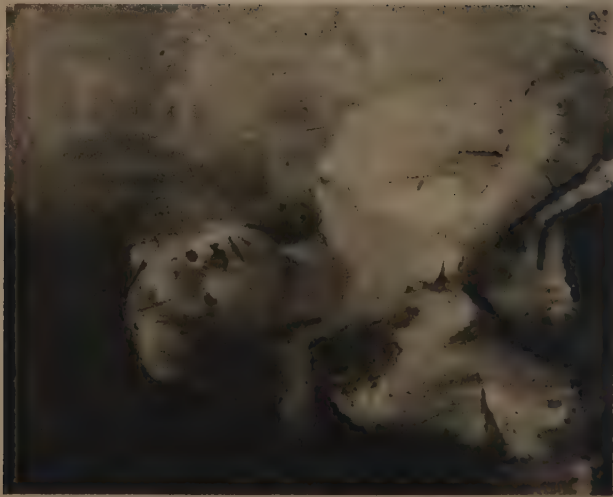
*Private Collection*

VICTOR PASMORE

Miss Hulbert



VICTOR PASMORE



The Gardens of  
Hammersmith  
by  
VICTOR  
PASMORE



*Private Collection*

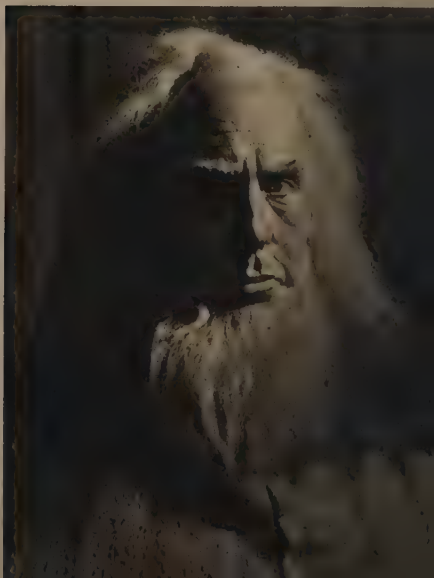


Edmund Kean as Richard III

*Rischg*

Donald Wolfit  
as  
King Lear

O. W.





*John Vickers*

Laurence Olivier as Richard III

*Beaton*



John Gielgud  
as Hamlet  
with  
Francis Lister  
as Horatio



John Vickers

At the CHANTICLEER THEATRE CLUB

John Vickers



THE INFERNAL  
MACHINE by  
Jean Cocteau  
Produced by  
Peter Brook

(Above)  
Robert Marsden,  
Sigrid Landstad,  
Frederick Horrey  
(Left)  
Joy Harvey and  
Frederick Horrey



*Derek Beck*

At the CHANTICLEER THEATRE CLUB

e) A HUNDRED  
 AS OLD  
 intero  
 ced by Greta  
 as with  
 y Fildes  
 ohn Lindsay  
  
 THE TROJAN  
 EN  
 ripides  
 ed in modern  
 y Greta Douglas  
 Martin Benson  
 . Maxwell Lyte

*Derek Beck*







JAMES BAILEY

Harbour Landscape

## ALAN ROSS

### NIGHT PATROL

LEAVING harbour at dusk, the red moon  
rising in a paper lantern, setting fire  
to the water, the black headland disappearing  
into the shadow of its clenched lion's paw.

The quayside loses itself, screened with dark  
distance, cranes like useless arms suspended  
over the railway, the silent unloading of coal  
starkly silhouetted under the harsh arc-lights.

Turning south, the moon moves like a white face  
between the masts, the knotted aerials swing  
against the horizon, tilting the world  
of sea into a rose of opening darkness.

Night and towards midnight, the stars high  
Over Europe, cold and frozen, nailed on the sky,  
like tinsel above the white flickering lights  
of Holland, the flashes of gunfire

Licking out over the silent coastline, betraying  
the stillness. Taking up position, night falls  
like a cloak about us, the cruising wakes  
of M.T.B.s lacing the dark with green speed.

From Dunkirk the flames open fanwise  
in a hand of light, like the rising moon  
setting fire to the sky, the remote  
image of death burning on the water.

The slow tick of hours. Clouds grow visible.  
Altering course and the moon on a new  
bearing. Northwards again, and Europe receding  
with the first sharp splinters of dawn.

The orange sky lies over the harbour,  
derricks and pylons like scarecrows  
black in the early morning light. And minesweepers  
passing us, moving out slowly to the North Sea.

## J. G. MILLARD

### · ARAKAN BOX

I THOUGHT,  
Remembering the speech he made  
Before they left us,  
'The history of wars, when written down  
'Has small reality,  
'And no more semblance of life  
'Than corpses in their graves, reduced by time to bones.  
'In books it is a wearisome affair  
'Of statesmen, wise or foolish,  
'Of battles fought with men  
'Who were not men, but figures  
Used to implement the plans  
'Of sawdust generals.  
'Flesh and blood are shown as oblongs  
'Drawn on paper.'

But now,  
There are only thirty of us left.  
Five yards away my friend is lying dead,  
Shot through the throat.  
I dare not move to drive away the flies  
But stare along the rough, hacked jungle lane  
Peering through the dim leaf-filtered sunshine  
For sign of any movement which will say  
They come again,  
A moving frond of fern, a trembling leaf;  
My straining ears  
Must catch the sound of snapping twig,  
The rustle of some frightened forest beast  
Through the close-pressing tangle of the undergrowth.

I must not wipe the sweat out of my eyes,  
Nor let the jiggling fraction of my mind  
Stray to far hills, miraculously cool,  
But think of killing.

He said,

‘ If you can hold them through the day,  
‘ While we reorganise defences in your rear,  
‘ You will make history.’

They have come twice already,  
And many of the bastards lie  
Heaps of old sacking, in the dying light.  
The dark shadows on the path  
Grow blacker every second.  
We shall hold them,  
It can't be long before they come again.

# THE CREATIVE WORD



RUPERT DOONE

## THREE SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTIONS

*Hamlet* : John Gielgud.

Mr. John Gielgud has a fine voice—of a golden timbre and able to soar. Such a voice is, to my mind, one of the essentials of the actor who is to play Hamlet. It is a cliché that there are as many ways of playing Hamlet as there are actors who can play it. I have come to the conclusion that, while most Shakespearian heroes can be interpreted—often enjoyably—by an actor whose interpretation is a compromise between the character and his own capabilities, there does remain one ideal interpretation which we should take as our standard.

This explains why, although an actor may shine in many parts (as does Mr. Gielgud), there is as a rule, *one* part he tends to make his own—because he is really attuned to it. Witness Miss Edith Evans as Millamant in Congreve's *The Way of the World* or as we are told Henry Irving was in *The Bells*, or Macready as *Macbeth*, or the great Keen as *Othello* and *Richard III* and so on back to Richard Burbage, Shakespeare's own leading actor.

Hamlet is a tragedy of the moral man—the case of a young intellectual in whom a tragic duty intrudes on his normal passions. At least on the surface of it one can say this is true without becoming involved in deeper discussion of tragic destiny. I wish to stress these normal passions in order to clarify a side of Hamlet's nature, viz.: the lover. (Is not Romeo considered a study for Hamlet?) And for my argument I wish to quote Hamlet's last words about Ophelia :

I lov'd Ophelia : forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum. . . .



If this is true then Mr. Gielgud fails to convey this aspect of Hamlet as lover. The tragic irony of Hamlet himself seems to me to lie in the fact that he did the right thing for the wrong reason. The fire that drove him was the hatred of his uncle-father and his jealous love for his aunt-mother (his own mother). And because of this he is so incensed against Claudius (his uncle-father) that he waits to assassinate him in his mother's room, rather than dispose of him while he is alone at prayer. Thus his decision not to kill Claudius while he is praying is not caused by any moral aversion to such an action (at least Hamlet does not say so), but by the wish to kill him in the most hell-worthy circumstances. This is his conscious reason; unconsciously it is, of course, supported by an inhibition—a wish to postpone the act of killing itself.

One of the key scenes of Hamlet is 'the closet scene.' It is here that we find the answer to several important questions: Hamlet's obsession about his mother; his revulsion from physical violence (Polonius he kills *on the spur of the moment* while *hiding* behind the 'arras,'—thinking he is the king); lastly the question of Hamlet's madness—is he mad or not? This I think is answered in practically the last words which he has in private with his mother:

QUEEN: What shall I do?

HAMLET: Not this by no means that I bid you do.  
 Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,  
 Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse  
 And let him for a pair of reechy kisses,  
 Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd  
 fingers,  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out,  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft.

Not mad, no, but *possessed*. It is this distinction between 'mad' and 'possessed'—this dæmonic quality—

which has confused some students (and actors) of Hamlet. More of this later.

Besides a beautiful voice—of fine timbre—Mr. Gielgud has a quality in his personality of aloofness and a gentleness of manner which fits him by nature to play this part. A kind of condescension—a double edged affair. His sense of speed of diction too complements his voice, denoting a quick intellectual comprehension which is certainly implied in the character. Thus he gives the impression of a certain lightness—an almost lyrical attribute of youth. For Hamlet is essentially a tragedy of youth. In this play *par excellence* we are moved to pity and fear by the spectacle of the young-in-spirit, the intellectually innocent, caught in the toils of his tragic inheritance :

O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.

But although I think Hamlet is young in spirit, I do not mean that he has not known physical love. My proofs for this contention ? 1. Hamlet's degree of love, exaggerated as it is (perhaps this is one of the indications of it) ? already quoted—my first quotation in this article from the play in the 'graveyard scene' (*Act V Scene 1*). 2. Ophelia's own words from *Act IV, Scene 5*. To dismiss this following evidence as coming from someone not responsible for what she says is to miss a great deal of the drama of the play. I do not wish to stress this side of the drama, but to ignore it is to miss the normal side of Hamlet's life—what he forsook. Here are Ophelia's words on the matter :

KING : How do ye, pretty Lady ?

OPHELIA : Well, God 'ild you. They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table.

KING : Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA : Pray you let's have no words of this : but when  
they ask you what it means, say you this :  
To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day ;  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.  
Then up he rose, and donned his clothes  
And dugged the chamber door,  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

KING : Pretty Ophelia !'

OPHELIA : Indeed la, without an Oath ! I'll make  
an end on't.  
By Gis, and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame :  
Young men will do't, if they come to't  
By cock they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.  
So would I ha' done by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed !

To my mind Shakespeare would not, at such a moment, put in this scene with its bawdy ditty, to get sympathy only for Ophelia's plight. It is meant for the whole pattern of the play. He has not mentioned (or shown us) the relationship in round terms, because it is not necessary to the drama as it stands.

As for Ophelia, she feels justified (in Act III, Scene 1) when she acts as the king's decoy ; in part because she feels deserted. She has in all faith given Hamlet everything and now perceives something has gone wrong—she doesn't exactly know what—and feels justified in doing anything (since she feels deserted) to know the reason why. She hopes in this scene to extort a confession from him, by confronting him with certain presents he has given her ; she wants him to admit that it is his passion for her which he is denying, that is driving him mad.

Too simple you think? But Ophelia is a simple girl; a girl brought up in old-fashioned simplicity—of strict principles—the young and naïve daughter of old Polonius, who is also naïve and simple in his own way.

At the Haymarket I thought Mr. Gielgud had left this point out of the Hamlet he presented us, which ultimately was Mr. George Rylands' responsibility, as he was the distinguished director of this production. The conception lacked the male insistence of a Hamlet, who in Elizabethan eyes would have been a seducer, no matter how moral he may be considered in other ways if my contention is accepted that Hamlet and Ophelia were lovers—married in the eyes of God—before the play opens.

When scoring laughs off old Polonius, Mr. Gielgud was acting on the assumption that Hamlet was 'not in madness, But mad in craft'; this 'craft' almost degenerated (however tactfully Mr. Gielgud did it) into a kind of *playing* at madness (playing in the actor's sense and not the character's)—a technical trickery. Recently Mr. Gielgud has been playing Valentine in *Love for Love*, in which play he has to pretend to be mad. At moments (but rarely) I was reminded of the way he played Valentine, while fooling with Polonius. Hamlet's humour is *ironical* not playful.

But it is quite true that Hamlet is not lunatic in the sense that Ophelia later becomes. But he *is* as I have suggested 'possessed'—possessed by his tragic mission—his cliff-like and unsought destiny. He is possessed or obsessed (obsessed being the same thing as possessed, in a lesser degree) like some character of Doestoevsky's. It is in this dark side of Hamlet's nature—as though controlled by some outside agent—that Mr. Gielgud again disappoints, except for one most marvellous line (Act I, Scene 4):

'Angels and ministers of grace defend us.'

No one could ask for more. The wealth of beauty—terrifying beauty—and grace Mr. Gielgud put into that line compensated for much. Short and sweet? Yes—but also great. On the whole this Hamlet is the reasonable Hamlet. Princely? Yes! The moral Hamlet? Yes! But lacking (in part) the Lover and the Dæmon—the sense of being possessed by the Ghost. Yet it is not for nothing that Mr. Gielgud has earned his place in our theatre as its ‘first actor.’ For here is a Hamlet—in spite of the qualifications made above—which shows great skill, grace and much perfection.

#### THE OLD VIC COMPANY

*Richard III*:—Laurence Olivier.

Can an actor be too well blessed with the graces and attributes of the actor? One might almost say that Mr. Laurence Olivier is handicapped in this way. I do not agree, as I have heard it contended, that he has not a beautiful voice. It simply is not so. He *has*, in my opinion, exceptional range and beauty of voice—notes of both gold and silver, so to speak. One might compare him to a baritone who can reach the tenor’s high notes, when necessary. Though at moments when on these high notes, there is sometimes uncertainty (at times he would seem to lose control). In movement he is without self-consciousness (a rare thing) and can show both energy and elegance; he is like some athletic dancer. I cannot help thinking what a fine Massine or Lifar he might have made (actually a mixture of the two) had he not decided to become an actor. He seems to love display and to enjoy (as it were) wearing a mask. He revels in all the paraphernalia of the actor—the trappings, costumes and make-up. To his credit he wears a false nose as Richard.

I was reminded by him of Keen in the rôle of Richard III (from a reproduction I have seen) who made this abominable character his own.

Mr. Olivier’s love of—and flair for—the externals

shows again in his great sense of rhythm (part of which is called timing by actors) a sense he seems to have fully exploited in the film of Shakespeare's *Henry V.* His slow drawn-outness of pace (reminiscent of slow motion film) or the sudden dartings (like some lame animal of prey) which suggested to me that on the whole he was relying primarily on *effects*—on externals. Here was an actor who seemed to be using *deliberately* modern methods—the rhythm of machines, etc.

Mr. Olivier as Richard seemed to delight in effects and graces, which though part of an actor's business, is not the whole successful though they may be. He seemed to be unaware of (if he was aware, unable to soft pedal) those graces with which nature and art had endowed him. He presented us with Richard the Cunning; Richard the Dæmon Lover; Richard the Treacherous; Richard the Cruel; Richard the Coward; and Richard the Inspired Soldier—but never with Richard the Sub-Human—the Monster—'the lump of foul deformity'—'abortive rooting hog'—'hunch-back toad.' This part of Richard (the Monster) was absent!

As the 'dæmon lover' when wooing Anne of Lancaster (whom later he marries, then has done to death) Mr. Olivier shows us what subtle poison flattery is when used with the hypnotic powers of a python. As 'the coward' having woken in his tent, on the eve of the battle of Bosworth, I felt Mr. Olivier was out of his element. For cowardice is not an outward grace, but a condition belonging to an inner conflict. (In this scene, the treatment by Mr. John Burrell, the producer, of the ghosts wandering in the Shades was excellently devised). As the 'dæmon soldier'—'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!'—Mr. Olivier was given full scope for his athleticism, swordsmanship and instinctive bravura in one of the best stage duels I have ever seen, where in convulsive jerks he spits out his life—as devilishly 'game' as we are told Rasputin was at the end. *Richard III*, as everyone knows, is not great as



Shakespeare's plays go, though the name-part gives every opportunity to an actor of virtuosity and panache, attributes which Mr. Olivier possesses, as I have suggested, in enormous degree.

*King Lear* : Donald Wolfit

It is not for nothing that Shakespeare shows us the Fool, for the first time, when King Lear is brooding over his wounds and humiliations, for the Fool is in fact Lear's counterpart—and Lear himself one of 'time's fools.' The Fool is the outward and visible sign of Lear's folly of heart and mind.

Mr. Donald Wolfit as the King is the most impressive Lear I have seen, though I would like to qualify that judgement when I think of him in relation to his supporting company.

Mr. Wolfit is in the tradition of the old style of actor-manager. He does not pretend otherwise. There is a commotion and shouting before he first enters, and he is nearly always in the centre of the stage. This is not necessarily a bad thing—in the case of Lear it worked excellently—but there is a correspondence between this kind of playing and his play-bills, where in enormous lettering is the leading player and the supporting leading players disproportionately smaller. Mr. Wolfit, besides being the leading player, is also his own producer. I am not going to say that all his company are of the same calibre as himself ('don't-cher-know-there's-a-war-on?'), but there are here actors of more or less equal technical skill, within the limits of their personality. For instance Mr. Richard Goolden who plays the part of the Fool and Mr. Godfrey Kenton who plays the part of Edmund (the latter badly mis-cast). I had, in fact, the feeling that the play was cast, not so much for the benefit of the play, as for the benefit of the management. Mr. Kenton should obviously have been cast in the part of Edgar, not Edmund who is the personification of bastardy in all its aspects. ('My father compounded

with my mother under the dragon's tail; and my nativity was under *ursa major*; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous.') This is not to say that Mr. Kenton did not succeed in what he set out to do—he did give a good performance. But he started with a handicap.

The Fool as played by Mr. Goolden could not in some aspects have been bettered. That is, in the everyday humble aspect of the Fool, where he achieved a touching degree of pathos. He hopped about Lear, twittering, like a sparrow about a seated old beggar, uttering his conundrums and cocking his head on one side, as if listening to someone else speaking, only half understanding the twisted wisdom of his words.

It was in these scenes, with the Fool, that I thought Mr. Wolfit's performance was mostly at its best. I did not feel he had the vocal power to roar against the storm, but I have never known a Lear to have enough voice to do so. Yet there *are* moments of greatness in this performance; especially as I have said in the scenes with the Fool. However I did not feel in Tom's cabin that Lear's mind had really cracked and become enfeebled. Rather I had the feeling that he was counterfeiting enfeebled madness in a silly drunken sort of way. I *could* imagine that on the cliffs with the blinded Gloucester he was at moments really demented, especially as he left the stage pursued by the soldiers.

Mr. Wolfit's appearance as Lear (make-up) was exactly right—pale, raddled, monumental—for although when we first see him he is ancient, he still bears the stamp of a warrior leader and looks like some great patriarch from ancient legend. He towered (as Lear should) above the characters that surrounded him. This performance by looks and plan was exactly right—an excellent blue print for the playing of the old hero king. A fine portrait.

How beautifully and with what terrible solemnity Mr. Wolfit evoked the goddess Nature and called down the

horrible curse of sterility upon Regan. What 'corrupted blood,' what family curse bred these two villainesses Regan and Goneril we are not exactly told—but we see that their dramatic purpose is that of two Furies—like the pursuing Furies from ancient Greek drama. We can suppose that Lear's 'crime'—the first cause of this tragedy—was Spiritual Pride—called by the Greeks 'Hubris.' And if we hang the portraits of Goneril and Regan—though on a smaller scale—beside that of Clytemnestra, Lear's (to continue the Greek analogy) undoubtedly hangs beside that of Ædipus. *King Lear* is the nearest approach to Tragedy in the ancient Greek sense we have, and this is one of William Shakespeare's greatest plays. Mr. Wolfit has done us well in this sixth year of total war to give us such a production.

## STEPHEN SPENDER

### TWO LANDSCAPES OF NOVEL

THERE are two completely different landscapes, charts and guide-books which are provided by the novelists. One landscape is the Nineteenth Century. The other let us call the Twentieth Century, though it begins with the *fin de siècle*. The capital towns of the first landscape are Tolstoigrad, Dickenston, Balzacville. Those of the second Proustville, Woolfton, Late James and County Joyce.

In Tolstoigrad, Dickenston and Balzacville there are streets in which the Inhabitants live. Some streets are for the rich and some for the poor. Look into one of the wealthier drawing-rooms and there are people of great character, but with well-defined standards and aims. The countess or great lady is concerned with getting her daughters suitably married to husbands who are wealthy, aristocratic and virtuous. The young are exposed to such temptations as make us watch them with anxiety, as we watch tender plants exposed to frost in May. The villains are those who outrage the standards of what is right and good in order to pursue their own base ends. In their hearts, though, they recognise their own wickedness and are sometimes capable of conversion. These characters behave in very different ways and have very different appearances. Yet fundamentally they share the same view of life. They approach the world with an air of expectation, and if there is disappointment in what life brings to them and deception in villainies, then we know that there are rules as to what is considered desirable in events and behaviour which have been broken.

Thus in the Nineteenth Century landscape a great deal is taken for granted. And this agreement as to aims, morals, standards and villainy constitutes a large background of such things against which the action moves. The fixedness of premisses enables things to happen. The characters know where they are in this world and how to get about it. They are well oiled with aims and motives. They speed forward to meet events which they anticipate.

In the Twentieth Century landscape, the inhabitants of Proustville, Woolfton, Late James and County Joyce there is not the same basis of acceptance, recognition and moral judgment. The characters seem all to pursue different aims leading to different goals; there is no clearly made line of demarcation between bad and good characters; the things that are considered desirable in the Nineteenth Century landscape are not necessarily desired in that of the Twentieth Century; and even when the inhabitants of Late James possess great wealth, their hold over it seems uncertain and their right to it is on æsthetic rather than social or moral grounds. The inhabitants of Proustville, Woolfton, Late James and County Joyce live all of them in different mental worlds, speaking in languages of entirely different standards, thinking in different images. A wall of incommunicability divides the characters of Late James from each other, so that for two people to understand each other's minds is considered a triumph of the art of living. In Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* the characters—most of whom have known each other since childhood—communicate in prose poetry. It is as though Virginia Woolf felt that communication at a deep level of interest could only be carried on in poetic language. The famous meeting between the two main characters of James Joyce's *Ulysses* passes without there being any real interchange between Stephen Dædalus and Leopold Bloom. In Proust the characters are absorbed in such entirely different sets of interests that their aims in life are a

perpetual source of mystery to each other, and to the reader.

Thus in the Nineteenth Century landscape everyone knows his place in relation to everyone and everything else; and these points being defined, it is possible to get about, to proceed from one point to another, from youth to age, from poverty to wealth, from vice to virtue, uphill, or, in reverse, downhill. The characters see houses, countryside and each other with the same eyes, and if their vision is sometimes distorted or transcended, it is altered by passion: the passion of Anna Karenina which makes her notice how her husband's ears protrude, or of a villain in Dickens whose view of the world is through a mist of blood and evil, or of an art collector in Balzac viewing his collection through the spectacles of an *idée fixe*. Passion makes people see things differently, and when their passions are not roused the characters view their surroundings with an appearance of objectivity, as though they all see things in the same way. In a garden, a drawing-room, or a street in Paris they all recognise the same garden, the same drawing-room, the same street. Passion which distorts is the result of plot, and it only occurs within a general framework of objective action and its distorted vision does not take command of the plot. Thus in *War and Peace*, Prince Andrew, when he is wounded, has a remarkable vision: but this vision is only a moment in the story, set within a framework of events which are going on, in their normal, unconcerned way, outside his vision; and the story is the thing, what happens is the final comment on people's lives.

But in Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, the later novels of Henry James, three or four characters in a novel are inhabitants of different worlds. Each sees the room in a different way, coloured by his or her perceptions, interests, obsessions, or degree of sensibility. The interest no longer lies in plot, because the agreed premisses which are necessary in order that attention



may be directed to events are lacking. Events which can grow into and out of the lives of a group of characters require there to be some foundation of agreed values, aims, relationships amongst these people. But here the characters are occupied with orientating themselves to life, and events seem accidents, interruptions to their attempts to discover themselves, each other and their environment.

In the Nineteenth Century landscape, the characters are like icebergs moving on the surface of the sea, carried by tides and currents of plot, and the interest, for the reader who is in a position to watch them from dry land, is in their clearly defined outlines, their attraction towards and repulsion from each other, their collisions, and so on. The two-thirds of all the icebergs which lies below the surface is taken for granted; the interest lies in what goes on above the surface, and this is the unfolding of the plot, from which, indeed, the nature of currents and tides may be inferred. But in the Twentieth Century scene, the interest lies in the two-thirds of the icebergs which lie below the surface, in the darkness of the waters, where outlines are dim, where positions can only with difficulty be apprehended, and where collisions occur with the force of interruptions coming from outside. The death of Stephen's mother in *Ulysses* has taken place before the book opens, and it reverberates throughout the book's thousand or so pages, like a vague rumour of a world outside.

The interest of development in Proustville, Woolfton, etc., lies in the revelations of what is often called 'sensitivity.' This term is used much in contemporary art criticism, and in phrases such as 'contemporary sensitivity,' as though it were a high, perhaps even the highest, æsthetic aim. This is significant, for the emphasis of sensitivity is on passive perceptiveness, not on the active creation of something deemed beautiful or good. Not only is modern art distinguished by this passive receptiveness of sensitivity, but in the modern novel the

only remaining value which places some characters above others is sensibility. Henry James's virtuous characters are better than his villainous ones because, above all things, they have a wider range of awareness, an intenser capacity for distinguishing between subtle shades of behaviour, in short, greater sensibility; indeed, sensibility is considered so high an aim in the later novels, such as *The Golden Bowl*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ambassadors* that James cannot forbear from endowing his brutal villains and villainesses with a great sensibility, and this is baffling to the unwary reader who does not expect a materialist like Chad or like Charlotte to be capable of such refinements of feeling.

Yet it is inevitable that sensibility should be a value in a world where there are no defined aims and values. For sensibility is the exercise of a faculty of knowing oneself in relation to events or people outside oneself. And this feminine virtue is practised by the heroines of Virginia Woolf's novels (Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, etc.), E. M. Forster's and Henry James's heroes and heroines. It is the centre of interest in Proust and is the virtue that more than redeems the Baron de Charlus. It is highly concentrated in Stephen Dædalus and one might suggest that in *Finnegans Wake* sensibility is extended so far that it becomes depersonalised, extending in all directions of time and space.

In the modern novel of subjective sensibility there are not good and bad characters, but sensitive and insensitive ones. This way of judging people extends also to events. There is no hierarchy of objectively important events which hold the characters in their grip of doom. Virginia Woolf seems hardly to know how to cope with a death in her novels, which often seems like an awkward piece of baggage impossible to be handled adequately in the flow of her characters' interior thoughts. E. M. Forster is much preoccupied with death, but as a mere accident. The mortality in Forster's novels is very high. A recent critic, Lionel Trilling,

commenting on this, writes that 'it is invariably sudden and invariably talked about in the most casual way.' And he ends a discussion of Forster's attitude to death with the significant reflection: 'There is one element in his (Forster's) work that does give the appearance of mysticism: it is his sense of life being confronted by death. A money-civilisation chooses not to consider this confrontation: it is one of our most pertinacious refusals and we support it by calling "mystical" anyone who does consider it.' This is revealing, for it shows how we are brought back to 'sensibility' again: in the absence of an attitude towards death the novelist provides a mere awareness of it in a world which refuses to show awareness either of life or death. The virtue of sensibility in modern art might be described, then, as a vibrant awareness of the relationship of subjective personality to realities in life such as beauty, personal relationships, sex and death, which are generally ignored by the arrangements of our machine-made society.

Lacking a 'hierarchy of events,' a trivial event may stimulate sensibility as much or more than the great solemn events in which the ritual of society in the past coincided with individual experience. A taste or smell which reminds the autobiographic narrator of Proust's novel of his childhood is far more revealing than anything in a big way that 'happens.'

The Nineteenth-Century novel is individualist, and so is that of the Twentieth Century, but the individualism is of two entirely different kinds. The inhabitant of the Nineteenth Century landscape is both individual and socially significant. The climbing characters of Balzac represent the struggle of a whole social class to the ascendancy: the legendary Dickens' characters represent ridiculous, loveable or evil traits which are elements in society worth singling out for praise or pillory. Dostoevsky also, despite his rejection of the whole structure and way of thinking of the Russia of his contemporaries, creates characters who are undoubtedly social forces.

The individualism of the inhabitants of Woolfton, Late James, County Joyce, etc., to which may be added Forster and Lawrence, is of an entirely different kind. The sensitive heroes and heroines of these novels are individuals in spite of society. They are inhabitants of a society where family ties and social relations have largely broken down, and in which individuals are thrown back upon the resources of such inner life as they can create for themselves, perhaps with the sympathy of a few sensitive and understanding friends. Whereas the heroes of Dickens and Balzac make an expansive claim on society with an expectation for a virtuous life of about £4,000 a year, and no income tax levied on it, the inhabitants of these latter-day novels make a shrinking and uncertain claim and they are evidently haunted by feelings of guilt about their incomes. The attitude of Henry James with regard to the incomes of his characters is somewhat like that of a solicitor pleading for a client to be let off his income tax. He firmly maintains that expenses are very high, the good and the cultivated and the sensitive life requires a background of country houses, gilt furnishings and servants in order that life may be fully lived. At the same time, the feeling that wealth is intrinsically evil, that there is an original sin of vulgarity attached to the makers of it, and that the inheritors, as part of their refinement, must be conscious of this, moves like a great sigh of uneasiness through the corridors and gardens of his novels.

Forster's and Virginia Woolf's characters have definitely stepped down their claim to support from society. They would both probably agree that the intellectual, virtuous and cultivated life can be supported on about five hundred a year with *A Room of One's Own* and a charwoman. Stephen Dædalus, the proud Irishman, makes no claim on society for the support of his gigantic intelligence at all. He lives on his miserable salary as a schoolmaster, and on what he scrapes together from journalism and poetry. The finances of Lawrence's men and women

seeking to release their instinctive selves on each other hardly bear thinking about; one may assume, though, that Lawrence's 'dark gods' and 'goddesses,' like Lawrence himself in his letters asking for loans, would not care a damn about their pride as long as they could maintain a minimal independence from the world of jobs and offices. Thus in the work of all these writers there is a situation resembling a divorce of the characters who represent 'sensibility' from society.

The relationship of writer to audience is a complex one, difficult to assess, but it is probably incompletely represented by the usual phrase that the writer is 'writing for an audience.' It would be equally true, sometimes, to say that he was writing 'against an audience,' and truest, perhaps, to say that he was writing '*about* an audience': 'for' them when he was representing a pleasing idea of them to themselves, 'against' them when representing an unpleasing one, but always *about* them. He is writing about an audience who are capable of taking an interest in themselves. Thus, if he appears to be writing about a class of people, or about animals, who are incapable of taking a literary interest in themselves, he is in reality writing about the feelings of the cultivated audience towards those who are incapable of being interested in themselves. It is this restriction which puts such definite limitations on all ideas about a new proletarian literature: until the proletariat are sufficiently cultivated to take a literary interest in themselves, there can be no proletarian literature, even by members of the proletariat, but only a literature representing the ideas of cultivated people about the proletariat.

Therefore in writing about subjective themes the novelist is writing about an audience each member of which is separated from every other by the lack of shared values, the specialisation of modern knowledge and culture, the disintegration of middle-class society, the breakdown of the family, and, together with all this,



the spread of mass education which makes everyone hold an opinion without there being the fairly high level of intelligence which is necessary in order that opinions may be more than stumbling blocks. Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Proust, James, etc., are isolated individuals conscious of this condition of affairs and speaking across many gulfs to an audience of widely separated people conscious of the same situation.

Of course, there are novelists writing to-day in the tradition of the Victorian novelists, and no one would deny that they have plenty of real life to draw upon. Life to-day is full of important social issues, characters as socially significant in their way as Mr. Pecksniff and Mr. Micawber. Humanity is still gross and sweaty, and the ultra-refinement of the subjective 'sensitive' novel (James Joyce avoids this) leads to a certain tenuousness of the material. Nevertheless, it is possible to feel that if the Nineteenth-Century novelists explored one kind of truth about men and women as social beings, the Twentieth Century has made its peculiar contribution which is true not just for this century, but for ever: that a part of the human condition is to be subjective and alone, and to continue throughout life the painful struggle to relate one's isolation to people and things outside oneself.

The school of interior novelists is complementary to the exterior school. The controversy between Henry James and H. G. Wells arising out of Wells's novel *Boon*, in which Wells satirised the late Jamesian manner, misses the point that James and Wells are each expressing an entirely different kind of reality. The same is true of Virginia Woolf's famous attack on Arnold Bennett in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*: although perhaps Mrs. Woolf is on stronger ground in attacking Bennett than is Wells in attacking Henry James. For the exterior novel in the hands of Bennett and Galsworthy declined because it lacked the belief in the triumphs of a successful middle class, or equally the fundamental perspicacity of



attack on that class, which distinguished the Nineteenth-Century novelists. Galsworthy following the Forsytes, and Bennett exhilarated by the splendour of Grand Hotels, have nothing of the spirit of Ariel which inspires Dickens, Thackeray and Meredith; instead of audacity in the enjoyment or the disparagement of wealth, we have a picture of society by docile spirits, like a wearied dog following a wearied master.

The 'interior' novelists have made a permanent contribution to realistic truth in fiction by portraying the mode in which the world is experienced by separate individuals: that is to say, through perceptions of the *I* within the body and mind of each one of us, imprisoned behind the senses of the body and divided from the rest of the world. This concentration on the mode of human experience has led, however, to a sharpening and narrowing of the range of focus in many novels. By comparison with the great social scenes of Dickens and Balzac, the histories of Maggie Verver, of Mrs. Dalloway, even of Stephen Dædalus, are small: yet there are passages in the works of these modern writers when the reader becomes aware of the unexpressed thoughts and half-formed words and vague first impressions of a man or woman alone impelled by no other motive than the pure perception of external objects.

We know, it is true, the thoughts of some famous characters in fiction when they are alone: those of Anna Karenina when she is about to throw herself in front of the train. But such solitude is not real aloneness which we are all aware of as a fundamental condition of life. It is simply that Anna is alone with her passion and her conscience, which is the voice of society. Such thoughts are conscious thoughts, and it is for a conscious and social reason that they are not communicated to anyone else in the novel, but the reader. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce create for us the thoughts of Mrs. Dalloway and Stephen Dædalus at moments when—to

the Nineteenth-Century novelist—their minds would—officially, as it were—be a blank.

A limitation of the method of the 'interior monologue' is that the novelist tends to be limited by his own subjectivity in his creation of character. We have much experience of other people from the outside, more of them, in fact, than of ourselves, whom we know from within. But once we start to take an inside view of people we are up against the fact that our only first-hand knowledge of a person from within is of ourselves. Thus the interior novel tends to be autobiographic, or, more deviously, crypto-autobiographic. At the same time, although the outlook and experience of the 'I' is narrow and subjective, within the 'I,' as within any other object of experience, there are roots reaching out to all other experiences. Contemplate a flower for long enough and one finds implicit in it the whole universe; contemplate James Joyce for long enough, and one arrives at *Finnegans Wake*.

Although each of us experiences life through the perceptive mode of the 'I,' we see it as 'Them,' the people and objects outside us. The life which we see in the street resembles Dickens more than Virginia Woolf. We think of other people as resembling Dickens's characters, but it is doubtful whether anyone has thought of himself as Micawber or Pecksniff. We know a great deal about other people without having much idea what thoughts are passing through their minds, still less the way in which they represent their perceptions to themselves. We know much of people's actions, less of their words, still less of their thoughts, and even less of the hidden behaviour of their mind when they perceive that the weather is fine, or when some half-formed recollection which has not attained the sociability of words, flits across their inner consciousness. Only in moments of intense sympathy, or in love, can we project ourselves into the feelings of other people, and even when we do make such an identification there is always a doubt

that we may be wrong about the true state of their feelings and simply imagining our own feelings into them. Still less can we imagine the inmost perceptions of people with whom we share no background of experience, though these are the very people whose external behaviour we may know most about.

The writers of the 'interior' novels evidently labour under all the disadvantages enumerated here. They have great difficulty in inventing convincingly the inmost mind of anyone who does not recognisably share a kind of idiom of perceptions with the author. Thus Virginia Woolf's women heroines share the idiom of Virginia Woolf's sensibility. The hyper-sensitivity of Henry James in human relationships extends to many of his characters and covers them with one thin skin. In making invented characters adopt the images and mental rhythms of their inventor the interior novel approaches very nearly to poetry, but at the same time it abandons the triumphant achievements of the Nineteenth-Century novelists in creating characters quite outside their own literary mental idiom.

James Joyce was the writer most conscious that interior monologue leads to a complete subjectivity which it is impossible for the reader to relate to outer events. External fiction means that the novelist is describing real behaviour which the reader can relate to his own experience. But when we are told the inmost thoughts of a character it is impossible to know whether they are 'true' to his or her psychology and situation or ingenious but arbitrary inventions. Here is an example, from Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*, of a kind of interior monologue which baffles the reader because there is no clear line which distinguishes the poetry of Henry James from the supposedly real thoughts of Maggie Verver. This passage conveys the inner conflict of Maggie's mind; we find her meditating on the circumstances in which her friend Charlotte—who has married her father and thus become her own step-mother—has

gradually alienated her husband (Prince Amerigo)'s affection from her :

' It had been an hour from which the chain of causes and consequences was definitely traceable—so many things, and at the head of the list her father's marriage, having appeared to her to flow from Charlotte's visit to Fawns, and that event itself having flowed from the memorable talks. But what perhaps most came out in the light of these concatenations was that it had been for all the world as if Charlotte had been "had in," as the servants always said of extra help, because they had thus suffered it to be pointed out to them that if their family coach lumbered and stuck the fault was in its lacking its complement of wheels. Having but three, as they might say, it had wanted another, and what had Charlotte done from the first but begin to act, on the spot, and ever so gracefully and smoothly, as a fourth? Nothing had been, immediately, more manifest than the greater grace of the movement of the vehicle—as to which, for the completeness of her image, Maggie was supremely to feel how every strain had been lightened for herself. So far as *she* was one of the wheels she had but to keep in her place; since the work was done for her she felt no weight, and it wasn't too much to acknowledge that she had scarce to turn round. ) She had a long pause before the fire, during which she might have been fixing with intensity her projected vision, have been conscious even of its taking an absurd, fantastic shape. She might have been watching the family coach pass and noting that, somehow, Amerigo and Charlotte were pulling it while she and her father were not so much as pushing. They were seated inside together, dandling the Principino and holding him up to the windows, to see and be seen, like an infant positively royal; so that the exertion was *all* with the others. Maggie found in this image a repeated challenge; again and yet again she paused before the fire; after which, each time, in the manner of one for whom a strong light has broken, she gave herself to livelier movement. She had seen herself at last, in the picture she was studying, suddenly jump from the coach; whereupon, frankly,

with the wonder of the sight, her eyes opened wider and her heart stood still for a moment. She looked at the person so acting as if this person were somebody else, waiting with intensity to see what would follow. The person had taken a decision—which was evidently because an impulse long gathering had at last felt a sharpest pressure. Only how was the decision to be applied?—what, in particular, would the figure in the picture do? She looked about her, from the middle of the room, under the force of this question, as if *there*, exactly, were the field of action involved. Then, as the door opened again, she recognised, whatever the action, the form, at any rate, of a first opportunity. Her husband had reappeared—he stood before her refreshed, almost radiant, quite reassuring.’

The fault in this passage is that the novelist, instead of convincing us that he is writing the poetry of Maggie Verver, is writing the poetry of Henry James, brooding over his beautiful creation. He only half creates his effects: for the rest he describes what he is setting out to do, and the whole passage reads like a series of inspired notes about the impression he wants to produce, rather than the achieved result. Many passages in Henry James’s last novels suffer from an ambiguity which is distracting rather than satisfying. The reader cannot tell where the centre of attention in these novels lies: is it, that Henry James can really pursue the inmost mental images which fleet through the heads of his characters, or are we to interpret a passage such as the one above as a kind of poetic soliloquy, like a long baroque passage in a play of Dryden? Or, again, are Henry James’s later novels elaborate fantasies into which he projects all the ramifications of his mind brooding on his creations? With all James’s prodigious art he does not create a convention, either sufficiently realistic or sufficiently stylised to make his manner wholly convincing, great as are the beauties to be found in these late works.



Late Henry James suggests, therefore, an unsolved problem, with two possible solutions. One solution would be to formalise and create conventions for the poetic novel, so that the reader could separate the poetic level of reality from that which represents real character and real action, as one can do in poetic drama. Virginia Woolf's experiments in form take up this aspect of the problem. Another way would be to make 'interior monologue' entirely convincing by giving the reader some clue in the characters, situation and environment of the novel, which would explain and justify and render convincing their inner thoughts and their modes of thinking and perceiving.

James Joyce, in *Ulysses*, explored this other aspect of the problem. Quite simply, his solution was this. Although we do not know the inmost workings of people's minds, we do know that their inner mental activity is stimulated by events, memories and environment outside themselves. Even our least consciously-willed mental activities, our dreams and day-dreams, can, episode by episode, image by image, be referred back to stimuli existing in our memory of the remote or of the almost contemporaneous past. Therefore the stream of inner consciousness becomes convincing if it is created as a projection on the inner mind of outer events. In *Ulysses*, Joyce invents the immense external and internal machinery of outer stimulus and inner mental process. He provides the reader with all the clues of appetite, symbol, environment and event which enter into his character's thoughts. The action of the novel takes place in Dublin, which is reflected within the minds of his characters like the image of a city on a stream. The reflection is broken and fragmentary, the current of the stream flows through it, but nevertheless, despite distortion, it has a basis of literal exactitude. Here is a quotation from *Ulysses* which shows a strip of Dublin in the muddled bywater of Mr. Bloom's mind :



' He crossed to the bright side, avoiding the loose cellar flap of number seventy-five. The sun was nearing the steeple of George's church. Be a warm day, I fancy. Specially in these black clothes feel it more. Black conducts, reflects (refracts, is it?) the heat. But I couldn't go in that light suit. Make a picnic of it. His eyelids sank quietly often as he walked in happy warmth. Boland's bread-van delivering with trays our daily, but she prefers yesterday's loaves turnovers crisp crowns hot. Makes you feel young. Somewhere in the east: early morning: set off at dawn, travel round in front of the sun, steal a day's march on him. Keep it up for ever never grow a day older technically. Walk along a strand, strange land, come to a city, sentry there, old ranker too, old Tweedy's moustaches leaning on a kind of a spear. Wander through awned streets. Turbaned faces going by, Dark caves of carpet shops, big man, Turko the terrible, seated cross-legged smoking a coiled pipe.

An endless flow of such half-digested thoughts flows through Bloom's mind. The process of thinking is typical of what we know of his character. The associations suggested by things he sees we recognise. The flow of his thoughts has a characteristic form imposed partly by his twilit state of half-knowledge, half-ignorance, partly by his appetites, sensuality, love of food, partly by attitudes of his mind with which we are familiar, such as interest in science, kindliness, his feelings for his wife and daughter, his grief over the death of his infant son.

The Victorian novel and the modernist novel of the Twentieth Century landscape create two entirely different but complementary attitudes towards human personality. The first creates character from the outside, from physical appearance, observable behaviour, which we can relate to the behaviour of people we already know, so that we can easily imagine making the social acquaintance of the characters in a Victorian novel. Characters are presented to the reader as resembling not his innermost self, but as *the other people*, the They whom one sees in the pageant

of life outside oneself, apprehended as They, not as many people who are I's as oneself is an I. In this, the novel not only imitates social reality, but it also reproduces the mode by which every one of us sees everything outside himself, as though the body were a perambulating house, with eyes as windows, from which each person looked out onto the world.

Thus the Victorian novel presents not only our knowledge of other people, but also our ignorance of ourselves. This self-ignorance is more than a literary formalism, it is a moral attitude which thinks that self-absorption and self-knowledge are wrong. The person too much interested in himself is selfish, sentimental (because he can only interest himself in other people when he identifies them with himself) and all that one implies by 'subjective.' He judges himself by himself and misjudges everyone else by himself. The golden rule in life which is practised is not 'do unto others as you would have others do unto you,' but 'do unto yourself as you observe other people doing unto each other.' Judge yourself as one of Them, not as a separate I.

The Victorian novel maintains this unsubjective moral standard. The social They of external behaviour, conversation that can be repeated, and ignoring of all private thoughts, sets up standards by which the individual judges his own personal life. The 'They' goes about dressed and has no indecencies. Therefore the 'I' tries not to think of itself undressed and having indecent thoughts. It tries, even when it is alone, to behave consciously and socially. It refuses to recognise the existence of an unconscious mind, the significance of dreams, the significance of purely personal and unconnected emotions, the isolated organic sensibility of every separate human individual. It treats all human experiences as though they could be shared by the whole of society.

Thus the 'They' creates a one-sided view of life which ignores the infinite diversity of many separate

beings all seeing the world from their own point of view. At the same time, sanity is on the side of the process of looking at the individual from the view-point of an enormous fictitious 'They.' The 'They' includes ideas which have clear connections with the past. It includes a tradition and a future, immaturity and maturity, a whole view of life, whereas the 'I' lives in a perpetual present, attached to itself at one particular moment. The 'They' view of life is, moreover, after all a projection of the 'I,' and there is no reason why it should be as partial and incomplete as the Victorians made it. Individuals in other times have judged themselves by an outside world which was more human than that of the Nineteenth Century. Probably the subjectivism of the Twentieth Century is due to the fact that the standards of Victorianism created a social picture of human beings which was so incomplete and inhibiting that there has been a revolt against this picture by the 'I' which is seeking to project the truth of its nature into another social picture of the 'They.'

Nothing is more possible than that a whole society should share a picture of the nature of human existence and of the relative values of different human aims, which does not correspond to the innermost needs of separate human individuals. This is particularly likely to happen in a society such as our own, organised on the basis of vast interests, businesses, politics, which are too large to be related to the scale of the human individual or even of the human group. The result of this kind of organisation is that everyone with the sensibility to insist on the reality of his subjective ego will be forced into revolt against the systematised organisation of aims and ideas outside himself.

But ultimately the experience of life as the people outside ourselves and as what goes on within ourselves is complementary. And it is the fusion of these two points of view which seems likely to lead to the next great developments in the novel.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

GEORGE CRABBE AND THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE antithesis between nineteenth-century Romanticism and eighteenth-century Classicism, particularly in regard to English literature, is an artificial one. It does not require a very wide acquaintance with the productions of the Augustan age to find those qualities of extravagance of sentiment and subject-matter, revolutionary unrest and intellectual adventurousness—the typical Romantic qualities—latent everywhere during the century which preceded the advent of Wordsworth and Coleridge ; and not only in those writers whom the text-books have labelled “Pre-Romantics.” If the Mediæval subject-matter and the Gothic horror of Gray’s *Bard*, or his adaptations from the Norse, *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*, are ‘Romantic,’ what about the *Eloisa to Abelard* of Pope himself ?

‘The darksome pines that o’er yon rocks reclin’d  
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
The wandering streams that shine between the hills,  
The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze ;  
No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.  
But o’er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Long-sounding aisles and intermingled graves,  
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dead repose ;  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

What about—and now we travel backwards in time even beyond the age of Queen Anne—Dryden's *Fables*, in particular his *Theodore and Honoria*, with its variant of the Wild Huntsman legend? And as for the Sentimental, it is already in full flood in the tragedies of Rowe and Otway, and the novels of Mrs. Behn. Indeed, in the 'Heroic' style of the Restoration period we see the beginnings of the Neo-gothic springing straight from the Metaphysical or Baroque: the revived Mediæval fashion from a manner which itself represented the last authentic expression of the Mediæval imagination in artistic form. (There are some noteworthy parallels in the English architecture of the same period.)

All this is now pretty generally admitted. But there is a danger in laying too much stress on this Romanticism before the Romantics, and in neglecting what was the genuine achievement of the writers of the Augustan age; an achievement upon which they very properly prided themselves, particularly in their verse. This was the humanising and socialising of the imagination, the conquest over the irrational and morally disruptive elements in it, the control of strong passion in stronger form. Pope, above all the rest, perfected in the Heroic Couplet a technical instrument which combined strength, subtlety and range to an astonishing degree. It can only seem monotonous to an untrained ear, or to an eye and tongue unskilled in the handling of verse. In the hands of a Dryden or a Pope it is capable of *almost* every kind of music, and in each of the other poets who followed in their footsteps it has its characteristic modulation, different for each author, which the reader familiar with the poetry of this period soon learns to distinguish. The sombre finality of Johnson:

'Year chases year, decay pursues decay,  
Still drops some joy from withering life away;  
New forms arise, and different views engage,  
Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,

Till pitying Nature signs the last release,  
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.'

The softer, slightly sentimental note of the Irishman, Goldsmith—

'The watchdog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,  
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind.'

—which note, indeed, he caught from his predecessor Parnell, that other Irishman, the friend of Pope and Swift :

'So parting summer bids her flowery prime  
Attend the sun to dress some foreign clime,  
While withering seasons in succession, here,  
Strip the gay gardens, and deform the year.'

Or, for contrast, take the breathless, overstrained rhetoric of the Wilkesite agitator, Churchill :

'The time hath been, a boyish, blushing time,  
When modesty was scarcely held a crime ;  
When the most wicked had some touch of grace,  
And trembled to meet virtue face to face ;  
When those, who, in the cause of sin grown gray,  
Had served her without grudging day by day,  
Were yet so weak an awkward shame to feel,  
And strove that glorious service to conceal :  
We, better bred, and than our sires more wise,  
Such paltry narrowness of soul despise :  
To virtue every mean pretence disclaim,  
Lay bare our crime, and glory in our shame.'

and the mild, provincial pleasantries of the *Table Talk* of his one-time fellow at Westminster, Cowper :

'Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,  
And tells, not always with an eye to truth,  
Who spann'd her waist, and who, where'er he came,  
Scrawled upon glass Miss Bridget's lovely name,  
Who stole her slipper, filled it with tokay,  
And drank the little bumper every day.'



To have created an organic tradition which had room for all these possibilities was the real triumph of eighteenth-century poetry. It was necessary, doubtless, that Romanticism should finally disrupt that tradition, but it is a mistake to assume that it was wholly bankrupt by the closing years of the century. George Crabbe as a young man enjoyed the patronage of Burke, and submitted his work to the correction and criticism of Johnson. Yet he was to outlive Byron, Shelley and Keats by nearly a decade, and was still producing some of his best and most characteristic work up to the time of his death. But his poetry is wholly a logical development of the central Augustan tradition, and its frequent power and originality are a striking testimony to that tradition's vigour.

I wish particularly to stress the essentially Augustan nature of Crabbe's poetry because I believe that its reputation has suffered as a result of that criticism which has adopted a purely historical estimate of his work, and has sought to exhibit him as a forerunner of the Romantics, together with his three strikingly diverse contemporaries, Cowper, Burns and Blake. In the case of the first of these such a treatment may, perhaps, to some extent be justified, but in his alone. Burns stands at the end of a respectable eighteenth-century tradition of Scottish vernacular verse—itself the resumption of a much older tradition that had scarcely died. As for Blake, so far from forerunning anybody, he outruns the Romantics, and most of our contemporaries, too. Crabbe has been made a precursor of Wordsworth, and even of Tennyson, but his Naturalism is of a different order to theirs, and he shows his strength precisely where each of them is weakest. Or he has been treated mainly as a landscape poet, and his occasional pieces of natural description have, by the anthologists, been torn from their proper context, where alone, as I hope to show, their true poetic significance is apparent.

Crabbe's early poem, *The Village*, is, indeed, mainly

a descriptive piece, basically a satire, almost a parody—a counterblast to the incipient Romanticism of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. Its documentary value is considerable—and we must remember that the meanness and squalor which Crabbe found in the lives of the peasantry, and the waste and neglect which he saw in the condition of the land itself, represented neither more nor less than the truth. It is, however, the underlying moral attitude which makes the poetry of *The Village*. Crabbe's treatment of his subject is fundamentally classical; he judges the life and conditions of the village as falling short of an organically conceived, functional ideal. Natural beauty, for him, is represented, as it was for Virgil, by the fruitful, systematically cultivated landscape. Crabbe was, as it happened, a keen amateur naturalist and botanist. And just as he has a sharp eye to record the different types of humanity under varying economic conditions, so likewise he is an accurate observer of what modern biologists would term the *ecology* of the natural scene:

' Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,  
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;  
From thence a length of burning sand appears,  
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;  
Rank weeds that every art and care defy,  
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:  
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,  
And to the ragged infant threaten war;  
There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil;  
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;  
Hardly and high, above the slender sheaf,  
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;  
O'er the young shoot that charlock casts a shade,  
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;  
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,  
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.

Note that this heath, and the various flowering plants which are here described, might equally well be regarded

as romantically beautiful. But they are described not for the sake of their own wild life, but are humanised and erected into figures of guilt. Crabbe goes on to compare the scene to—

‘ . . . the nymph whom wretched arts adorn,  
Betrayed by man, then left for man to scorn.’

He, indeed, imputes a ‘moral life’ to natural objects, but it is the reverse of that which Wordsworth found in them, since it is seen as the consequence, not the source, of man’s feelings of social morality.

*The Village* was published only a few years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, but in spite of its exposure of the miseries of the poor and the veil with which polite sentimentality strove to cover them, its basic inspiration has nothing in common with that which animated the Revolutionary Romantics of the succeeding generations. Crabbe’s ideal throughout his life appears to have been that of the settled agrarian community which was in fact rapidly passing away. If he praises the benevolent landlord who watches over the welfare of his tenants, his pity for the sufferings of the latter in other cases is always checked by reproaches against their want of industry, thrift and sobriety. He draws his values from the past, but it was by such means that he was able to supply himself with that strong framework of moral and human standards which gives its remarkable consistency to his later work.

We have seen that Crabbe’s imaginative attitude to landscape is to be sharply distinguished from that of Wordsworth and the other Romantics. For these last it is Nature that is truly alive, a quasi-divine Power. The human personality is, in a sense, less than Nature, and partly, at any rate under the conditions of civilisation and intellectual maturity, alienated from her. For Crabbe, on the other hand, it is the human personality which acts upon an essentially lifeless and featureless

Nature. The poem entitled *The Lover's Journey* is composed as an obvious set-piece to illustrate this point of view :

'It is the Soul that sees ; the outward eyes  
Present the object, but the mind describes ;  
And thence delight, disgust, or cool indiff'rence rise ;  
When minds are joyful, then we look around,  
And what is seen is all on fairy ground ;  
Again they sicken, and on every view  
Cast their own dull and melancholy hue ;  
Or, if absorbed by their peculiar cares,  
The vacant eye on viewless matter glares,  
Our feelings still upon our views attend,  
And their own natures to the objects lend ;  
Sorrow and joy are in their influence sure,  
Long as the passion reigns, th' effects endure ;  
But Love in minds his various changes makes,  
And clothes each object with the change he takes ;  
His light and shade on every view he throws,  
And on each object, what he feels, bestows.'

Thus the poem begins and continues to illustrate the text by describing the journey of a lover who rides to and from the appointed meeting with his mistress, and thus views the same landscape twice altered for him by the differing emotions to which he is successively subject. This psychological point of view of Crabbe's is directly in the eighteenth-century tradition. He is putting into practice in his poetry the theories of the imagination developed towards the beginning of the century by Addison and Shaftsbury, and expounded in his not wholly inconsiderable philosophical poem, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* by Mark Akenside. These theories, to be sure, were also part of the *framework* upon which the Romantics built up their statement of the relation of Man to Nature—or, rather, the inadequate tools by means of which they sought to explain certain powerful personal intuitions, which pointed the way to

a different and profounder conception of the relation of the individual to his environment. But for Crabbe these theories were not inadequate, because he had not passed into that more spacious world bounded by the dimensions of the Romantics. Hence his poetry is at home in the world of individual human beings, as is that of Dryden or Pope, and the prose of the great line of eighteenth-century novelists from Richardson and Fielding to Crabbe's contemporary, Jane Austen. That of the Romantics, with the partial exception of Byron, is not.

The best of Crabbe's sketches, both of individuals and of classes in *The Village* and *The Parish Register*, descend directly from the satiric character-portrait of Dryden and Pope. But as Crabbe's art develops he largely abandons the satirical method, with its element of conscious distortion, and makes his portraits rounder and fuller. His extraordinary eye for detail—the eye of a man trained in medicine or of the field naturalist—gives to his pictures a documentary value quite apart from their poetic merit. Critics have, I think, in general paid him his due in respect of the former, but have failed to recognise the latter. For it is the poet who gives to the cataloguing of individual idiosyncracies the significance whereby his characters take on something of the same quality as Chaucer's. Here, for instance, is the gently ironic conclusion of his portrait of the Vicar from *The Borough*:

'The rich approved—of them in awe he stood;  
The poor admired—they all believed him good;  
The old and serious of his habits spoke;  
The frank and youthful loved his pleasant joke;  
Mothers approved a safe contented guest,  
And daughters one who back'd each small request:  
In him his flock found nothing to condemn;  
Him sectaries liked—he never troubled them;  
No trifles fail'd his yielding mind to please,  
And all his passions sunk in early ease;

Nor one so old has left this world of sin,  
More like the being that he entered in.'

It is indeed a mistake to think of Crabbe as mainly a descriptive genre-painter of the eighteenth-century peasantry. From *The Parish Register* onwards the narrative element plays a larger and larger part in his work. Moreover, in his later poems he no longer confines himself to what his own age would have termed 'the labouring poor,' but draws his characters from among the provincial middle classes, the prosperous farmers, and even the country gentry. At the same time his preoccupation becomes increasingly psychological and less strictly moral or social.

The original satirical impulse of Crabbe develops in his later years into something wider, a more human sense of irony. Many of his tales are little comedies of manners which might conceivably have been written in prose by Jane Austen, had she cultivated the short story instead of the full-length novel, and had she possessed the rather wider acquaintance with the vagaries of human nature in different classes which Crabbe's calling as a country clergyman provided him with. That she greatly admired Crabbe's work is well known, and she is reported once to have let the remark fall that she ought to have been married to him. It might, one feels, have been an excellent match.

But it is when Crabbe's irony takes on a tragic tone that he shows himself the more remarkable and original poet. The story of *Edward Shore* furnishes us an example of this tragic irony. The hero is represented as a free thinker—and that for Crabbe and most of his audience meant not so much the assertion of an intellectual freedom as the denial of the moral laws whereby the society of the day was held together, and with which religion, for the eighteenth-century Protestant, had become almost entirely identified. But Edward Shore himself denies this, and places his reliance upon the



individual Reason. He possesses a friend, older than himself and of sceptical principles; the wife of this friend he seduces, meanly abusing his trust. The incident brings disgrace and remorse in its train, and going from bad to worse, Edward Shore finds himself at last in the Debtors' Prison. From this situation he is, after a time, released; but the shock of discovering that this is through the kind offices of that very friend whom he had wronged is too much for him. His brain gives way, and he becomes first a maniac and then a harmless idiot:

'Harmless at length th' unhappy man was found,  
The spirit settled, but the reason drown'd;  
And all the dreadful tempest died away,  
To the dull stilness of the misty day.'

In outline this may seem at first sight a crude enough cautionary tale, but its psychological subtlety becomes more and more apparent as we examine it closer. Edward Shore relies on his reason to preserve his virtue, but as soon as he is tempted he falls a victim to his passions. He cannot persevere in villainy, but the consciousness of a guilt he will not openly admit to leads to his material as well as his moral ruin. But it is the sheer irrationality of what follows that finally defeats him. His friend, by his action of generous forgiveness, displays a side of human nature which the scepticism to which they both subscribed had failed to take into account. Finally, Shore, who had deified his own Reason, finds himself deprived of that very faculty, and becomes the companion and the butt of children:

'Rarely from town, nor then unwatch'd, he goes  
In darker mood, as if to hide his woes;  
Returning soon, he with impatience seeks  
His youthful friends, and shouts, and sings, and speaks;  
Speaks a wild speech with action all as wild—

The children's leader, and himself a child ;  
 He spins their top, or, at their bidding, bends  
 His back, while o'er it leap his laughing friends ;  
 Simple and weak, he acts the boy once more,  
 And heedless children call him *Silly Shore*.'

The tale of the two brothers, the Shelleys, of whom one, the outwardly virtuous, is a gamekeeper, while the other, more reckless and lovable, seeks independence and is forced by his poverty into poaching, and in the conflict which ends only with the death of both of them, has in it the material of tragedy in its simplest and most primitive form. The tragedy centres upon the figure of the gamekeeper's wife, who nevertheless loves the poacher. The description of her journey by night, in an attempt to avert the tragedy, is another good example of Crabbe's psychological treatment of descriptive passages :

' She heard strange noises, and the shapes she saw  
 Of fancied beings bound her soul in awe.

' The moon was risen, and she sometimes shone  
 Through thick white clouds, that flew tumultuous on,  
 Padding beneath her with an eagle's speed,  
 That her soft light imprison'd and then freed ;  
 The fitful glimmering through the hedgerow green  
 Gave a strange beauty to the changing scene ;  
 And roaring winds and rushing waters lent  
 Their mingled voice that to the spirit went.'

The brief comment—

' Two lives of men, of valiant brothers, lost !  
 Enough, my lord, do hares and pheasants cost ?'

put into the mouth of one of the keepers when the bodies are discovered is perhaps the most effective piece of social criticism in the whole of Crabbe's work.

Perhaps one of the most deservedly famous of all

Crabbe's descriptive passages is the following, which is taken from the story of *Peter Grimes* :

' When tides were neap, and, in the sultry day,  
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,  
Which on each side rose swelling, and below  
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow ;  
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,  
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide  
In its hot, slimy channel slowly glide ;  
Where the small eels that left the deeper way  
For the warm shore, within the shallows play ;  
Where gaping muscles, left upon the mud,  
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood ;  
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace  
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crooked race ;  
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry  
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye ;  
What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,  
And the loud bittern, from his bulrush home,  
Gave from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom :  
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,  
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice ;  
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,  
Ran with a dull, unvarying, sad'ning sound,  
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,  
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief, or fear.'

This has a strange, dark, brooding melancholy about it such as we sometimes find in the work of Tennyson (also a poet of the East Coast, with its ' glooming flats '). It is indeed not far off from the dream landscape of the later poet's *Mariana*, where everything that is seen is coloured by the presence of the wasted, passion-starved life which is that of the lonely inhabitant of the Moated Grange. In Crabbe's poem, however, it is the guilt-ridden mind of the drunken, sadistic fisherman which here projects itself. He is soon to be overtaken by madness and haunted by the ghosts of the father he has defied, and the unfortunate boys he has murdered. It

is to be noted how the continually repeated images of slime and polluted waters constantly suggest the pathological state of the festering mind of Peter Grimes.

It is easy to scoff at this element in Crabbe's work as crude melodrama. It represents rather the seeping back into consciousness of all that the eighteenth century strove to suppress, yet which had nevertheless played a part in its most characteristic poetry. It is there in the phantasmagoria of *The Dunciad* (especially the fourth book) and in the distorted figures which crowd the Cave of Spleen in the *Rape of the Lock*:

' Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen,  
Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.  
Here living tea-pots stand, one arm held out,  
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:  
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod walks;  
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pie talks;  
Men prove with child, as powerful fancy works,  
And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.'

as it is in the savagery of Swift, the sadness of Johnson. The Romantic movement was to face this element, and in so doing gave it truly poetic form and transformed it into something else. But in the closing decades of the eighteenth century it breaks through the surface both of life and of poetry like a stream of amorphous lava. Hence the enthusiasm of Smart and the Methodists, the visionary hysteria of Blake, the mania of Collins and Cowper. And in the solid, rugged surface of Crabbe's poetry there are also fissures. *Peter Grimes* is one of them; and the comparatively early poem *Sir Eustace Gray* is, perhaps, more than a mere fissure. Rather it is a pot-hole through which we look down at the seething and bubbling sea of fire, which, we are astonished to realise, was beneath our feet all the time.

Like so many of Crabbe's tragic poems, it deals with the subject of sudden shock and conversion. Sir Eustace Gray has been reduced to madness partly through mis-

fortune, partly through the consciousness of guilt and religious enthusiasm. The most famous passages in the poem are those in which he describes his possession by devils—

‘ They placed me where those streamers play,  
Those nimble beams of brilliant light ;  
It would the stoutest heart dismay  
To see, to feel, that dreadful sight :  
So swift, so pure, so cold, so bright,  
They pierced my frame with icy wound,  
And all that half-year’s polar night,  
Those dancing streamers wrapped me round.’

Like some of the poetry of Coleridge and Francis Thompson, and the prose of De Quincey, these passages are famous as owing their inspiration to the author’s use of opium. But the whole poem shows a facet of Crabbe’s poetic character which is hinted at more frequently in other passages of his work than is generally realised. We see how closely his strong moral bent is linked with an extraordinary capacity for rendering poetically a particular mental state of oppressive guilt and anxiety.

I hope I have been able to show that Crabbe is more than a commonplace moralist whose verse is occasionally enlivened by passages of descriptive writing. He has suffered by comparison with the great Romantic writers who were the younger contemporaries of his long life. He is to be judged not according to the standard by which these wrote, but in relation to the Augustan tradition which they destroyed. From *that* standpoint, indeed, he was their superior ; and Byron, whose own verse retained much of the vigour and catholic quality, if little of the formal perfection of the eighteenth century, rated him above almost all of them. (True, with that lack of consistent judgment which tempts even his loyalest admirers to lose patience with him, Byron rated equally high—or even a little higher—the elegant vacuity of Samuel Rogers.) In the next generation it was

Edward Fitzgerald who alone, among the Victorians, carried on the Augustan tradition of grace and urbanity in poetic expression, who was the great champion of Crabbe. The latter's poetry would (prophesied Fitzgerald) outlast Browning. Browning is not in fashion in the twentieth century, but I suppose there are few who would go all the way with Fitzgerald on that point. Nevertheless, Crabbe seems to wear remarkably well.



## WALTER ALLEN

### HENRY GREEN

'THE pink decade' the nineteen-thirties have been christened, but in spite of the sneer, for any writer of the 'thirties to have been non-political, to have aimed at pure art, is in a way itself suspect; and Henry Green is one of the very few pure artists among the novelists of the 'thirties. His second novel, *Living*, pre-dated Auden's first book of verse by a year, and reading it when it appeared one was excited by it in much the same way as one was by Auden, one cannot say wrongly because it was impossible to foresee his next novel, *Party Going*, written between 1931 and 1938. The subject-matter of *Living* gave him, as it were, honorary membership of a movement in writing to which he never truly belonged; but in 1929 it was the subject-matter, life among Birmingham factory workers, that fascinated. In the novelty of the material, while one admired the style one saw it as little more than eccentricity, an attempt to express new subject-matter in a new way; for already emphasis had passed from technique to content. But with the publication of *Party Going* one could no longer see it that way; in it it became clear that Green stood apart from what had become the contemporary movement, that he was an artist in an older sense, in a way that Flaubert and George Moore and Joyce were artists, men whose main pre-occupation was with style. For such writers material was of course not unimportant: Flaubert has for so long been summed up in a single sweeping phrase *le mot juste*, that it is necessary to remember that *Bovary* and *L'Éducation Sentimentale* are magnificent social documents just as *Ulysses* is an excellent *vade mecum* to Dublin. But for the pure artist, with his preoccupation with methods of expression, subject is of secondary importance in that

he sees it as existing mainly as the vehicle for a method of expression ; and as Flaubert followed up the study of provincial life that is *Bovary* with the archeological reconstruction of *Salammbô*, so Green could write first a novel of working class life in Birmingham and then a novel about wealthy irresponsibles which, considered in terms of content alone, should be trivial and is anything but that.

It is anything but that because of its style. In *Pack My Bag*, Green has stated his idea of the function of prose :

‘Prose is not to be read aloud but to oneself at night, and it is not quick as poetry, but rather a gathering web of insinuations which go further than names however shared can ever go. Prose should be a long intimacy between strangers with no direct appeal to what both may have known. It should slowly appeal to feelings unexpressed, it should in the end draw tears out of the stone.’

That is obviously no description of prose as it is written by most of the best contemporary writers, by Isherwood and Orwell and Graham Greene. Prose has become colloquial and direct, has returned to Dryden and Defoe and Swift. We no longer object, with Johnson, that the ‘rogues never hazard a metaphor’ ; but Green hazards them continually, and to such an extent has the plain style conquered that, reading the Sunday reviewers, you might be pardoned for inferring that *Party Going* was the work of an illiterate. Beneath this apparent naïvety, the occasional superficial resemblance to the Stein stutter, his prose is a prose carefully wrought, highly sophisticated and highly mannered, the most distinctive prose in contemporary writing. Whereas the basis of most modern prose is the simple sentence (to take an extreme instance, there is only one relative clause in Halward’s story *Arch Anderson*), each paragraph of Green is planned and built up as carefully as the octave of a sonnet. Take the following, from *Pack My Bag* :

‘ Later, when the accident I have described disrupted me, I felt, and it is hard to explain, as though the feelings I thought I ought to have were hurting me. I was as much alone as any hunted fox. Only as my feelings turned and doubled in their tracks to the loud blast of news each cable brought, as conscience the huntsman cast my feelings forward and then back until the fox I was was caught, bowled over at last into genuine surrender, there was something desperate in the noise, the howling at my heels. At this distance the noise of the pack is stilled, their music as it is called comes from over the hill, the huntsman, now an older man, blows his horn gently, and the note, now so distant it is no louder than a breath to bring forgotten embers to a glow, is a shame remembered, a run across familiar country.’

Green is, in fact, to use Connolly’s word, a Mandarin ; of a new kind certainly, but none the less a Mandarin.

Or there is another way in which Green’s distance from his contemporaries may be measured. Compare him, for instance, with Calder-Marshall, a writer of much the same social class and education, and one of the leading theorists of contemporary fiction as well as a characteristic practitioner. His style, more violent than Isherwood’s and Orwell’s since it is based on Joyce and the shock-tactics of Wyndham Lewis, is akin to theirs in that it aims at direct expression. His progress, one may say, has been from psycho-analysis to social realism, from Freud to Marx ; so that his books are the record of a personal development which has also been the typical development of a generation. His work, then, forms a continuum. Green’s does not in any such way ; with the exception of his first novel, *Blindness*, written while he was still at school, it is not at all the record of a personal development. He is aloof from his material in a way that Calder-Marshall is not ; and he is untouched, as a writer, by contemporary ideas whether political or psychological. Lawrence defines the novel somewhere as a ‘ thought adventure,’ and for the majority

of writers this is true. But Green—and this is another sign of the pure artist—appears to be quite apart from his work, outside it; it is not a series of disguised chapters of autobiography.

His prose is, I think, a poetic prose. It was so conventionally in *Blindness*, a first novel of no more than average promise, though the theme, a literary and Etonian adolescent going blind and adjusting himself to blindness, is ambitious. There, the writing, the descriptions of nature in which the book abounds, are Georgian: Rupert Brooke is just round the corner and John Drinkwater may drop in at any moment. But after Eton and Oxford Green went to work in his Birmingham foundry. He started his novelist's career with one great advantage over his middle-class contemporaries: as the boss's son, with an inherited interest in a foundry, he could move, as it were, up and down the social scale as he pleased. In order to write about working-class life, as in *The Nowaks*, Isherwood had to go to Berlin; but Green could go to Birmingham.

In his Bordesley foundry he worked on the floor for some months, writing *Living* in his spare time. The difference between *Blindness* and *Living* is as startling as the difference between Oxford and the Coventry Road must have been to the author. The title of the book is itself defiant, as though Green had discovered life for the first time. No working-class writer could have written the book; the author's delighted sense of novelty is carried over to the reader, and it is significant that it has had no apparent influence on working-class writers apart from James Hanley, who owes something to its style in his *Stoker Bush*. The theme is now a familiar one: the displacement of labour by reorganisation and the infatuation of a girl who wants marriage and children before anything else with a young man who finally, and comically, deserts her. But it remains, after twelve years, the best novel of factory life written by an Englishman.

But *Living* is not, as one interpreted it when it first

came out, primarily a realistic novel. Green escapes, sometimes through a poetry of incident, sometimes through a daring arrangement of words which may be called poetic, often through both at once, the bounds of narrow realism that have confined most writers of working-class life in this country and trembles on the verge of symbolism. As an example of what I mean by poetry of incident the following passage may be quoted :

‘ Then, one morning in iron foundry, Arthur Jones began singing. He did not often sing. When he began the men looked up from work and at each other and stayed quiet. In machine shop, which was next iron foundry, they said it was Arthur singing and stayed quiet also. He sang all morning.

‘ He was Welsh and sang in Welsh. His voice had a great soft yell in it. It rose and rose then fell again and, when the crane was quiet for a moment, then his voice came out from behind noise of the crane in passionate singing. Soon each one in this factory heard that Arthur had begun and, if he had two moments, came by iron foundry shop to listen. So all through that morning, as he went on, was a little group of men standing by door in the machine shop, always different men. His singing made them all sad. Everything in iron foundries is black with the burnt sand, and here was his silver voice yelling like bells. The black grimed men bent over their black boxes. . . .

‘ Everyone looked forward to Arthur’s singing, each one was glad when he sang, only, this morning, Jim Dale had bitterness inside like girders, and when Arthur began singing his music was like acid to that man and it was like that girder was being melted and bitterness and anger decrystallised, up rising up in him till he was full and would have broken out—when he put on coat and walked off and went into town and drank. . . .

‘ Still Arthur sang and it might be months before he sang again. And no one else sang that day, but all listened to his singing. And that night son had been born to him.’

That is a good sample of Green's style in *Living*: bare, repetitive, harsh, angular, sometimes deliberately clumsy, an admirable medium for the expression of the blackness and din of a foundry. Green tells us in *Pack My Bag* that in the Oxford English School he failed to learn Anglo-Saxon; but whether by design or not, the prosé of *Living* is an Anglo-Saxon prose, many of its devices, the omission of the definite article, the emphatic 'that,' are Anglo-Saxon devices, and one suspects that Sweet's *Old English Reader* had a greater influence on Green than he knew.

As an example of the tendency towards symbolism I would quote the way in which the background of drab streets and public parks is dominated by the flights of homing pigeons, as though Green himself, writing at the window of an upper room, were endlessly fascinated by their flight... Any conscientious realist might have put in the pigeons as part of his detail. But Green makes much more out of them than this. They recur again and again throughout the book, sometimes in simple description, sometimes as images for the working of the character's minds. They are symbolic at once of escape, of the life beyond the labyrinths of brick, and the attachment to home and the familiar scene. This use of something approaching symbolism gives *Living* a unity underlying its formal structure; and such passages remain in the mind in 'a gathering web of insinuations.'

In *Party Going*, as the subject-matter lessens in importance—it is the world of Evelyn Waugh, with a difference—so the style becomes more rotund and involved and the symbolism deepens. A party of what would once have been called bright young people are going to France as the guests of an absurdly rich young man; they meet at the station, fog holds up the train, and they are marooned in the upper rooms of the station hotel, while the hordes of workers waiting for trains below, singing community songs, thicken until they threaten to swamp the hotel itself. What Hollywood



calls the 'plot-line' is as simple as that. Symbolism, concrete in its imagery, stirs the mind with the richness of its implications, and if it can be translated into definite terms, into a prose meaning, is symbolism no longer. A case in point is the incident—its repercussions run through the book—of the spinster aunt at whose feet a dead pigeon tumbles in the station entrance; she picks it up, takes it to the ladies' lavatory and washes it, and makes it up into a brown paper parcel. The discovery disturbs the party, as it disturbs the reader; the incident is funny, but it is more than that, and its meaning cannot be paraphrased. To account for its effect one is forced back, as Forster was when discussing the nature of Lawrence's genius in *Aspects of the Novel*, on some such word as prophetic.

*Party Going* is a comic novel; it can rest, I believe, on the same shelf as the best of Firbank. But it is on its symbolism that I have preferred to concentrate, since it seems to me, as a symbolic novel, so much more successful than anything the English disciples of Kafka have written. The difference between it and Upward's *Journey to the Border*, for instance, seems to me the difference between symbolism and allegory. *Journey to the Border* can be paraphrased, it is 'about' something, a moral can be extracted as you can extract no moral from Kafka: in the little streets down by the docks there is a small newsagent's where you can buy the *Daily Worker*. Upward's is one of the most exciting novels produced during the last decade; yet in the end the book fails, the excitement fizzles out, the explanations begin, the reader is let down. The moral is not commensurate with the excitement that has been generated in the imagination. More than any book of the decade it shows the dangers that beset the imaginative writer who is also a political writer. *Party Going* may be much less worthy from a left political view, and it is certainly less ambitious, but it succeeds as Upward's does not, and is original in that it derives from the author

alone. You may see it as an exposure of futility and as a satire on people with wealth but without responsibility ; or you may read it simply as a comic novel. It is all these ; and something more ; obstinately itself and irreducible to a single moral. Again Green's own phrase, 'a gathering web of insinuations,' best describes its effect.

*Pack My Bag* is a slighter work than the two which preceded it, though the style is richer and more consciously poetic. It is right, I think, to see it as a substitute for a novel ; it is a crisis book written in 1938 and 1939. Green calls it a 'self-portrait,' and though it is a book that nobody interested in modern writing must miss, one reads it primarily for the light it throws on Green as an artist. The content is ordinary enough : other people have described expensive prep schools and the pleasures and trials of hunting and fishing ; and Eton is now a familiar scene. But, like the novels, it is an original book. Autobiographies of childhood and adolescence, whether avowedly autobiographical or ostensibly fiction, fall generally into two kinds. There is the report on experience, the intellectual, analytical, almost clinical study, like *Lions and Shadows* or Connolly's *A Georgian Boyhood*, in which the author attempts to answer the question, 'How did I come to be the man I am ?' ; and there is the attempt to recreate the past in itself, without reference to the author's present state, as in Spender's *The Backward Son*. In either case the writer looks as far as possible at himself as though he were somebody else. Green makes no such attempt. 'It is all wrong,' he writes, 'to try to recreate days that are gone. All one can do is search them out and put them down as close as possible to what they now seem.'

The result is a highly subjective, highly personal book. His Eton days cover, for instance, much the same period as *A Georgian Boyhood*, which may almost be read as a gloss on *Blindness* and *Pack My Bag*, but the pictures of Eton are so different as to be pictures of worlds that appear to have nothing in common. It is significant

that Eton is not even given its name. The book portrays one isolated human being as child, schoolboy and undergraduate, and so strong is the sense of isolation that one feels the author's withdrawal to be deliberate. There is no trace of any concern for ideas, any preoccupation with society and the individual's relation to it.

During the war Green has been in the Fire Service and the theme of his novel *Caught*, published two years ago, is life in the A.F.S. before and during the early part of the blitz on London. It remains by far the best novel dealing with that period. Green has added to his equipment as a novelist by achieving a complete mastery of the eddies and convolutions of working class speech, seemingly endless, maddeningly repetitious, thick with qualifications and explanations, lit up with 'swear words like roses in their talk.' Out of a series of such conversations he made his surprising tour-de-force the short story called 'The Lull,' which appeared in the Summer, 1943, *New Writing and Daylight*. In snatches of flat, often pointless conversation he expresses a whole range of characters and the boredom they feel. The result is a strange poetry, the kind of poetry achieved by an artist like Beaton in his blitz photographs or that a brilliant film director sometimes discovers in shots of the sordid and banal. Green's ear and the camera's eye are alike in making familiar things new, and that, for Dr. Johnson, was a definition of poetry.

This aspect of Green's art is strongly brought out in *Caught*. But there is much more to *Caught* than that alone. *Caught* is an organic growth. Picasso has said of himself and his work, 'I do not seek, I find,' and that is applicable to much of Green's work. Many of his most characteristic achievements, what the eighteenth century would have called his beauties, have the air of *objets trouvés*, things found, not contrived. With most novels one knows pretty well what is going to happen, and why. One may be presented with a moral problem, and the interest depends upon the subtlety and fairness

with which it is worked out. Or if the life described in the novel is one familiar to the reader, the interest lies in the light which the author is able to throw on the already known; one seeks, in a way, a confirmation. With other novels, those of Huxley or Isherwood, for instance, what interests primarily is the personality of the writer, which unites the most diverse scenes and incidents of the story. With a novelist like Graham Greene, again, one is fascinated by the playing out of what one recognises as an extraordinarily compelling personal myth.

But in *Caught*, as in Green's fiction as a whole, there is another quality, not easily defined. One is moved obscurely, as by some kinds of poetry in which the meaning is never clear and can never be wholly clear. Which is to say that Green's novels arise from a layer of consciousness deeper than that from which fiction usually emanates; one is aware at one and the same time of several strata of meanings. Events are never simple or single in Green's world; they have their symbolic meanings too.

This is apparent both in *Caught* and *Loving*, whose common theme has been described as 'an emotional Black Hole of Calcutta.' For what exactly is *Caught* about? Life in the Fire Service. The lives of men and women held in unwelcome proximity for too long and with too little to do, gossip-ridden and corroded by suspicion. The mutual distrust of the working class man and the middle class man. The overwhelmingly disastrous effect of sudden authority and hero-worship combined on a man totally unprepared for them. In part, an account of the first night raids on London; in part, a father's puzzled devotion to his son and a brother's puzzled devotion to his sister. All these go to make *Caught*, but all these, as it were, simultaneously, fused together, so that no one strand can be isolated and drawn out without the whole fabric perishing. From one point of view *Caught* is a tragi-comedy of misunderstanding; everyone talks at length, but there is no

communication. There is no communication between the middle class auxiliary Roe and his five-year-old son, as there is none between the principal antagonists Roe and his officer Pye, whose lunatic sister abducted Roe's son. The title summarises the book; it is the incomprehension and incommunicability of Kafka played out in a naturalistic setting, and the tangle of thwarted understanding and frustrated urge to communicate can be resolved only by the death of Pye by suicide and the liberation of the auxiliaries from their 'emotional Black Hole' by enemy planes bombing the docks.

Green's titles have a particularly organic relation to his novels: *Blindness*, *Living*, *Party Going*, *Caught*, *Loving*. When Jane Austen wrote a novel called *Pride and Prejudice* the theme of that novel was precisely pride and prejudice, just as Fielding's *Tom Jones* is about a young man named Tom Jones. The relation between contemporary titles and contents is more esoteric: *Eyeless in Gaza*, *All the Conspirators*, *England Made Me*, *The Horse's Mouth*, all these are ironical comments rather than titles in the old sense. Isherwood called his autobiography *Lions and Shadows*, using the title of a novel he had planned but not written; in other words, the titles were interchangeable. One has heard that in Gaza an Arab bookseller had his window stocked with Mr. Huxley's novel, thinking it a guidebook to the town. He had a literal mind, but not more so than our own eighteenth century novelists or Henry Green. Thus, Green's latest novel, *Loving*, is summed up by the title: it is about loving; not love, but the condition expressed by the verbal noun. As almost every character in *Caught* is caught, so practically every character in *Loving* is in a state of loving. Again, as in *Party Going* and *Caught*, the characters are set in a confined space, marooned, as it were, on a desert island too small for them in the midst of the great world from which they are cut off. The desert island of *Loving* is a castle in Eire staffed almost entirely by English servants who do not venture



outside the grounds for fear of the neutral Irish. The period is that of the blitz ; they are well out of it, glad of it, and guilty about it. The castle, like the fire station of *Caught*, and the hotel rooms of *Party Going*, is a web of gossip, intrigue, scandal and misunderstanding, though the novel throughout is written in terms of pure comedy. As in *Caught*, the whole book revolves round one nuclear incident : ' Mrs. Jack,' the daughter of the owner of the castle, is surprised one morning in bed with her lover by a housemaid. It is the beginning of the end ; everything follows from that. From then on it is inevitable that Raunce, the butler, and Edith, the housemaid, should run away together to England.

Though on a smaller scale than *Caught*, it represents in some ways an advance on it. It is much more closely knit, and in many ways Raunce is a more subtle character than Pye, because Mr. Green is continually surprising us with new facets of his character. At first he seems to be nothing more than a petty fiddler, then a hypocrite, then a lecher. As facet after facet is revealed we realise that he is more complicated than our preconceived notion had allowed for, that he is that rare creation the character in the round, who surprises disconcertingly, as people do in life. But Green is the enemy of preconceived notions of character.

Green has now written five novels. They are all very different, not only from the works of any other novelist writing to-day, but from each other. Among the ranks of contemporary writers he is as much on his own as Miss Compton Burnett, but every novel he writes is unpredictable, which can scarcely be said of Miss Burnett's. He has, perhaps, the most completely original vision of any writer of his generation. That alone is not enough to make a good novelist, but when it is combined, as in Green, with technical mastery and the resources of a virtuoso, it is enough to make him, if not the best, certainly the most exciting novelist writing in England to-day.



## FROM A PAINTER'S NOTEBOOK

### II

WHATEVER the present state of classicism, and whether or not—I am told that some doubt it—there has really ever been such a thing, the idea of the classical artist is certainly on the decline. The classic calm, the classic intellect, the classic vacuum, few of us believe in any of them. An artist's best friends, whatever his mould, now seem to be his enthusiasms. We envy the man upon whom a passion has seemed to descend like a disease before he was fairly out of the nursery, for dewy meadows, or back rooms with brass bedsteads, or just for the human shape. A disease that is lived for and happily died with; has the painter caught it?

Alert for the inner omens, we are apt to fancy in ourselves and the times an impoverishment of feeling. Those mental occupations which appear to have kept the masters so happy, a pursuit of perspective, for instance, a devotion to the antique, what have we to compare with them? I think every painter who went to the Leger Galleries in March felt predisposed to sympathise. Messrs. Mowbray were showing some of the results of their competition for paintings upon religious subjects. These were the matter and the enthusiasms which brought European painting to birth. How moved we should have been to find a picture that gave hope that they still held their life for painters. But if there was one such submitted it did not find its way past the committee. It was not on the walls.

The hope was not, of course, a reasonable one. The most distinguished committee does not quite command the magic to produce such a revival. But there was this excuse for feeling more nostalgia than anything else at the Leger Galleries, that the same nostalgia was

the mood of most of the exhibitors. They had ransacked the centuries for a style that would bring back the old feeling, just like rummaging through a cookery-book for 'cakes like mother used to make.' What was the recipe for to-day? The Byzantine recipe was popular. There were a few more Baroque mixtures, and some touches of the Douanier, in the best of taste.

I looked, I admit, for painting. Was that fair on what were, after all, illustrations? It was perhaps mildly surprising that the artists, as illustrators, should have found so little difficulty in separating their subjects from that humane poetry with which Rembrandt endowed, one had thought lastingly, the Protestant New Testament. No doubt there was an explanation; Rembrandt is done with, or Protestantism is, and earlier splendours have become more attractive. But a distinction between painting and illustration is not one which a painter would be likely to admit. A painting, whoever it is done for, stands or falls as such.

For some of this very conspicuous collapse one must blame the organisers. They tried to buy a miracle. That is what it would have been if a respectable picture had appeared to meet their requirements. Something more than money is required from those who would assist in such a difficult and improbable revival.

The deliberate guidance of an art is as difficult a task as anyone could set himself. The first step, I think, for the would-be midwives at the birth of a new religious painting should be, after forming a committee of course, to consider two questions. First, which of the feelings which appear to have animated the best painting of the last three centuries can be called, however broadly, religious? (For we must assume, I fear, that traditions both of feeling and of painting which have been interrupted for more than three hundred years are indeed out of reach.) And second, which, if any, of the religious ideas which remain dynamic at the present time have ever, or might ever, interest painters? If either question

could be answered at all there would be a chance; it would be worth the committee's while sitting a second time. But if the two answers coincided, then there would be real hope.

There is an answer, and without waiting for the Committees I propose to give what I think it is. There is a feeling which has moved in great painters and is still amongst us with its magnetism unimpaired, the feeling for 'that of God in every man.' The words are George Fox's, a saint, though not perhaps a favourite one of Messrs. Mowbray's.

If a committee ever reached this point and were not deterred, they could then, we may imagine, take action. First they would disqualify all pictures which smelt of Ravenna. It might also be wise for them to refuse for a time to sanction for their purpose any pictures containing more than three figures, on the grounds that in the present state of painting ingenuity must wait upon feeling. Meanwhile they would circulate to all painters and art-schools the documents in the case, the results of their deliberations in leaflet form, together with appropriate reproductions, Rembrandt's Supper at Emmaus and that self-portrait of Cézanne's which used to be in the Pellerin collection, Domenico Veneziano's head of St. Augustine in the National Gallery, Courbet's Polish exile and Goya's etching 'Sad Presentiments,' with Masaccio's 'Tribute Money,' as an appendix.

The next step would be to select two or three painters of the first rank who had shown themselves seriously and humanely interested in the look of their fellow beings and commission each of them to paint a full-length, life-size figure in their best manner, with no other restrictions or advice than that the committee would on delivery attach to each a halo and the name of whichever saint it chose. And then it would have done nearly all that committees can do. If there was humanistic religious painting to be done, and if there was a market for it, it would continue and develop of its

own accord. If the churchmen arrayed beside Messrs. Mowbray still want religious painting after seeing the Leger Gallery exhibition the plan would be worth trying.

If the organisers of the competition were sanguine the painters were frivolous. The majestic enigma of deity has been in the last four centuries a chief pre-occupation neither of painters nor of the world at large; it is frivolous to assume a Byzantine manner as if a picture were a kind of charade. The Byzantine spirit has quite another significance in modern painting. It is present in Rembrandt's Bridal Pair, and in the self-portrait of Cézanne, it is active in Rouault. Religious painting involves, among other things, a painter's realisation of what is profoundest in his own tradition, and most universal. The Cézanne is an emblem, in a way which a record of individual mystical experience, a Blake say, is not of the values which are the property of a whole society. If Cézanne had cared to attach a halo to this head there would have been nothing incongruous in it. We wonder at the holy dignity of a human being. It would be as appropriate to a place of worship as any St. Jerome that was ever painted.

From Messrs. Mowbray's exhibition no one could have guessed what order of thing the painters of modern Europe have held sacred. But somewhere an artist may be painting human beings and appreciating them. I am afraid that unless Messrs. Mowbray make much more strenuous efforts the churchmen will not find out about it in time to benefit.

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In seriousness we are still getting lessons from France. In 1893, while the great guns of French painting were going off with shattering detonation all round him, Bonnard was painting a gay, funny, perfect picture of a hen and some chicks. (It belongs to Miss Ethel Sands.) Now, at the end of another kind of bombardment, here, in a second Du Chêne portfolio, is Bonnard's

work during the war. He is still on the trail, pursuing the same things, adding to the same heroic life-work.

Bonnard's long symphony is not drawing to its close in a tremendous fortissimo, as Titian's did. One would not have expected it. His fifty-year campaign in the use of colour as form has scored so many resounding successes that it is not to the point to try to pin down just which way the battle-line is wavering at the moment. The doubtful factor, what is at once weakest and most winning, is still the same, the wilful suspension of the sense of form itself. The picture that remains in the memory is a self-portrait in a toilet mirror, a *contre jour* in which a golden cascade descends upon the gaunt octogenarian head. Not the picture to hang beside an Ingres, perhaps, but an emblem as moving as any we are likely to see of that constancy which, neither submitting to the world nor despising it, persists in its own way.

French artists have a tradition which circumscribes closely their dealings, enforces a frame, their studios, their favourite meadows, within which their vigours have full play. Other nations are not so blessed. Mr. Feliks Topolski, a Pole, ranges the world; at Wildenstein's recently he showed an exhibition of his rarely seen oils. The cavalier liveliness of Mr. Topolski's drawings covers so much new observation of matter outside anyone else's range that they are nearly always acceptable. The faculty of dramatising form as he records it makes him the only draughtsman I know who could ever (they are not comparable in any other way, of course) speak the language of Forain and Daumier.

But the paintings are a different matter. In them the artist stages a full-dress Delacroix revival, but without the master's iridescence—concatenations of hot colour without relief buffet one another to no purpose. The painting is unsympathetic enough. But there is an aristocratic aloofness, as we know, in the temperament of some Poles which we can hardly understand. It is



difficult to forgive Topolski for doing what I did not think any European could do—turn the miseries of the time into a ritzy Baroque ballet.

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Painters' enthusiasms are a strange enough study. And I should like to see an elegant essay written (though not, I hasten to say, by me) on 'The Bees in Painters' Bonnets.' The buzzing is continual. Delacroix haunted by the classic, Pissarro by the Gothic, Seurat compiling, with his Assyrian thoroughness, his curious theory of the direction of lines. A fantastic collection it would be. It is fascinating to observe how each painter's root obsession secretes, where it meets the light, some curious and intractable enthusiasm, an addiction to play acting or a hatred for the Jews, a quaint and horny carapace to protect the processes which are going on inside.

A great deal of discussion has been heard recently upon the readiness of painters, especially the younger ones, to rush, as they say, into print. The habit does not appear to be declining. A few defend it, I believe. But there is much to be said against the painter's judgment. We must admit that his writing is at best concealed autobiography and furtive canvassing in the politics of his profession. Painters know little about painting. But one seeks in vain for the evidence that non-painters know very much more.

The painter can do two things by writing, and both are valuable. Writing for painters he is contributing to a ferment. I don't think we can stifle this ferment and pretend it doesn't exist; it is the only compensation we have for not living in a time of settled tradition and certain livelihood. Any kind of exchange of ideas that forwards the right mixture of intoxication and sense is worth making. And to those who are not painters the writing of a painter can give a notion of the kind of passion which painting involves. The paintings could be left to do this by themselves, of course, if they were



not being half-hidden by so much lukewarm literary vapour.

A good example of both the functions of a painter's writing was Mr. John Piper's *English Romantic Artists*, of two or three years ago. It was the fact that it was a partial view, full of misleading special pleading, that made it worth writing. Nobody could have read it without getting a new view of the kind of enthusiasm which produces pictures.

A painter, if he is worth anything, reacts to pictures with the whole of himself. A picture which no longer excites either loyalty or animosity is done for.

A month or two ago a circular appeared from the Central Institute of Art and Design announcing that they were about to publish a new series of histories of painting, called 'Discussions on Art.' The Central Institute, I should explain, is an organisation of some official standing, established at the National Gallery, which takes subscriptions from painters and furthers the interests of their profession. When we hear that such an authoritative, almost governmental, body is taking a hand outlining painting for us, we may well feel nervous. 'Great variety,' the Institute told us, with an eye on the post-war which is now upon us, 'like much clamour from many voices, can confuse the mind.'... So 'we have thought it worth while to codify European painting' into 'the simplest possible guide . . . for the student, the designer and the interested amateur.' So there it is, the clamour is to be stilled, the confusion cleared, and every student who might otherwise have been excited and upset by one of those many voices is to be encouraged to absorb the authoritative codifications of the Institute.

Lest there should be any doubt about what is in store for the students and the interested (if they still are interested) amateurs, the Institute gives us an extract from the volume on British painting by Mr. William Gaunt, billed as the brilliant author of that (very far

from brilliant) book, *The Aesthetic Adventure*. The extract deals with Turner and Blake. On Turner Mr. Gaunt follows the well-worn track: 'If Turner eventually loses himself in indeterminate abysses . . .' and hurries on to the safe ground of the '*Frosty Morn*, which might advantageously be compared with a Corot'; and the 'quiet beauty of his *Evening Star*.' Blake is managed just as easily: a reference to 'the strange and obscure prophecies,' an assurance that 'it is possible to see a good deal of reason in him,' and that is that.

There is nothing in Mr. Gaunt's approach 'in terms of the post-war outlook' to suggest that anyone's pulse has ever been quickened by either of them. Now at this moment Blake and Turner are in their zenith; in every other studio there is a painter reeling about intoxicated by one or other. In the painting of the immediate future they are incalculable agents, under such stars anything may happen. At one end of the town Blake is installed high patron of that journey of rediscovery into the depths of the English heart. And at the other is Turner—who led the way into Impressionism—leading the way out again. Yet here is Mr. Gaunt, 'as ever, patronising, apologising, sticking the old labels on again, and putting the artists back in their dusty boxes.

Mr. Gaunt's little piece is called 'Two Cockney Visionaries.' In my opinion if any student should ever pick up Mr. Gaunt's words instead of, say, Mr. Piper's, it will be a thousand pities. For they make as chilling a piece of journalism as ever spoiled an appetite.

If there are not enough books about painting, let us have books which will point out just how lively the past is as a productive force, books that will set the student's head on fire and make the interested amateur more interested still. If the aim is to describe painting in terms of the post-war outlook, let us have writers who know something about the outlook, let us have the men who do the looking. Let us have Henry Moore

upon Masaccio, Augustus John on Rubens, Wyndham Lewis on Mantegna, Paul Nash on Girtin, and the early cubists. Edward Burra can write upon the Mannerists, Matthew Smith will contribute a few aphorisms on Titian and Matisse, William Coldstream will do Ingres and Seurat, Michael Ayrton can have Brueghel, with Bosch thrown in, and Edward le Bas, of course, the Impressionists. Victor Pasmore will do Turner, John Piper's contribution is already written, the Delacroix will be by Duncan Grant.

Such a programme is too much to hope for, such excitements do not accord with the nature of institutes. So they must proceed with their plans, equipping students with respectable opinions, giving them all, as the prospectus has it, 'at least a nodding acquaintance with the history of great painting.' But possibly some will escape. There will be some fellow they have not thought it worth while to codify and provide the simplest possible guide to, Dumesnil de la Tour, perhaps, or Cosimo Tura. And some painter will come across him, get a bee in his bonnet, paint a lot of pictures the code doesn't provide for, and the much clamour from many voices, if it has really been stilled, will begin all over again.

# THE LIVING MOMENT



R. H. MARTIN

## AFTER BOMBARDMENT

To describe it as hellish is stupid because no one has seen Hell. And when you come out of it you don't bother about describing anything like that at all. It is only months later when you have forgotten what most of it was about that you try likening it to something else.

The bombardment had been going on for hours and now it was over, and George crawled from beneath the truck. There was still plenty of noise going on, the echoing rattle of sten guns looking for snipers mixed with rumbling crashes of falling masonry. Large indefinite shapes of buildings in the near-by town were shrouded in smoke and dust. You couldn't tell about anything else because there was nothing else you could see.

The truck was on the side of the road that led back out of the town. 'The' road is correct, for there were no more roads left. George stayed close up against the truck, there being no other place to go, and there was a little matter of an order telling him to stay with it wherever it went. But the latter was quite by the way, as far as he was concerned.

After a few minutes the driver crawled out, energetically spitting, and swearing at the top of his voice. He stood up by George's side and continued to swear, not that George noticed anything because the driver swore all the time anyway.

'Bloodyell,' said the driver, and lots more besides, 'where are those so and so civvies they told us about,' only he didn't say 'so and so.'

'We got to creep in and look for 'em, I suppose,' said George.

'We creep in hell, this truck stays where it is and you an' me along of it,' grated the driver. 'There ain't no

one about, is there?' he said with a trace of pleasure, then solemnly, 'We gotter look after the truck, so I'll ease 'er down the road to that gate and turn 'er round.' As he said that, there was a lot more noise from sten and bren guns, so that all George heard was '... turn 'er round.' The driver was already climbing into the cab, and George eased himself round to the other side keeping close up against the radiator and front wheels. He had just got the door open when a fog-horn of a voice bawled out above the general din, 'You there, who are you?' George let himself down from the step again and the driver thrust his head out over the door, his mouth hanging open. Neither of them could see anyone nor did they speak. It was difficult to see anything properly over fifty yards or so away; dusk was on them and the air was full of grit. Then all at once they saw the owner of the bawling voice push his way through a hole in the hedgerow on the opposite side of the truck. He trotted up to the truck, spat out some grit, and shouted, 'Who do you belong to?' The two men gaped at him and saw that he was a captain. It takes a long time for things to soak in after a bombardment and they continued to stare at him stupidly. Any turn of events had to be considered slowly and carefully. 'Are you all right?' thundered the captain into George's ear. George picked some mud off his face with his already mud-filled nails and said, 'Yes, we're all right... sir.' Then the driver gathered that this captain wanted to know who they were, so he muttered, '256 S. and E. Company,' as if hoping the captain wouldn't hear him. But the captain had good ears as well as a good voice. 'Evacuation? Good. I've got a load for you.' And the driver said, 'Bloodyell,' under his breath, and lots more besides.

The captain left them and went over to his hole in the hedge, that is, it may have been the same hole—there were so many.

He looked down over what must have been a dip in

the field and shouted, 'Allons-y !' and then stood out in the road. Through the hedge there issued a small straggled group of nondescripts, a varied mixture of shapes and sizes. Then the little ones hastened themselves up to the big ones and they all stood in a helpless lump in the gutter.

The captain seemed in a hurry, for he was already hauling down the tail-board and snapping out, 'Entrez . . . entrez dans ici, entrez, pronto.' The lump in the gutter moved gingerly across the road to the back of the truck, and George roused himself to the fact that he ought to be doing something. Two men had climbed into the truck and were helping others in, so he held up a small girl and they took her from him. Then he picked up some small bundles of scanty possessions and threw them into the back of the truck. There was a breaking of glass as one of them hit the floor, but nobody appeared to notice anything. They were all in and the captain pushed up the tail-board. He hesitated a moment, then said to George, 'You get in and keep this lot quiet, I'd better be up with the driver.' And he was gone and half-way into the cab.

There was no question of keeping anyone quiet. They all sat around on the floor like a bunch of ghosts, white, drawn faces staring at George through the gloom, swaying from side to side with the rock and bump of the truck. Despite the failing light, and as the vehicle drew away from the town leaving behind the smoky atmosphere, the shapes inside became clearer and more like live people.

There were three men, four women, a girl about sixteen, five children and one small baby. None of them appeared to be injured, though one of the men might have hurt his arm. His right coat sleeve hung empty. They rarely spoke to one another except in furtive whispers, sitting rooted to the floor, their eyes as expressionless as a crowd of London tube passengers. Even the baby refused to cry.

George felt strangely stupid and uncomfortable. They



might want something or need to ask him questions, and he would be useless, for he didn't speak French nor could he get them anything. It was his first trip with this truck. In his pocket were two cigarettes, but he didn't dare light one without offering the other, and he was not prepared to give his last one away. So he just sat and looked blank with the rest of them.

Every so often the truck was flung a foot into the air as it crashed over a pit in the road, and on one occasion the infant in arms started to whimper loudly, but its crying was a poor effort, as if it had a lump in its throat. The baby's crying seemed to be a cue for a general discussion and a babble of French beat back and forth through George's ears.

The baby's mother pulled her blouse on one side and the child ceased its crying on taking up the attack on its supper. The mother said not a word all the time. She was a short, stout, little woman with black hair, a little upturned nose and a short excuse for a chin. Her lips were thin and dry, her eyes tired and completely dull, and her small, pea-shaped head rocked about as if she were an overgrown baby herself. She was sitting dead opposite George, but at no time appeared to realise he existed.

Now, groans and squeals punctuated the undertone of babbling as the truck swung round corners and didn't miss bumps and holes. Gunfire was intermittent, and the bangs of the reeling truck were drowned only by the roar of low-flying aircraft.

They had left the main road and the common misfortune of snail-like progress in one of the never-ending convoys. The by-road was little more than a cart-track and threw them about with unfeeling abandon.

On one corner they pulled up with a horrible stomach-rending jerk that sent the passengers rolling on top of one another. George extricated himself from the arms of a fat and dirty old lady who whined a series of 'Ahaaa's' for several seconds afterwards.

The engine had stopped with the vehicle and George

could hear a staccato conversation going on in the vicinity of the cab. There seemed to be a lot of voices for two men.

After a few minutes, with a loud scraping and scrambling, three shapes hoisted themselves up over the tail-board and fell on to the floor. It was now much darker, but George could discern that three more British soldiers had been picked up. And that was all he could see, except that one of them appeared to be round and tubby, and when he pushed his cap off his head might have been bald, but it was difficult to see.

As soon as the men had sorted themselves out they started to make themselves at home. Into that listless apathetic group of French burst a minor tornado.

'Gawd, that was a bit of luck!'

'He said it was going to D——'

'Who was that bloke next to the driver?'

'Some officer.'

'Gawd, and I called 'im chummy!'

'He won't shove you on no fizzer.'

'What's in this truck?'

Two of the men sat on the opposite side to George and the fat man sat in the middle of the floor.

'Refugees. 'Ordes of 'em.'

'There ain't that many.'

'Lots of kids.'

'Yeh, lots of kids, pore little buggers.'

'Look, there's a bloke over there.'

'Whadaya mean?'

'One of our blokes. Gettin' a lift, chum?'

'No, I'm with the truck,' said George.

'No! Fancy working with a mob like this! Don't it get on yer tits?'

'No worse than anything else,' said George.

'I wouldn't want ter work with a lot of Froggies.'

All the other passengers had lapsed into complete silence, apart from the baby who gurgled and sucked greedily at his supper. It was now very dark and George

could hardly see the others at all. Faces were suspended like cloudy moons, never still, but deathly silent.

'Never could get on with Froggies,' said the little fat man from the middle of the truck. 'It's that blasted language that gets me. Just a lot of gabble.'

'Remember old Bill learning French?' said one of the other men. 'Remember how he started getting off with the farmer's wife?'

'Yeh, bloody larf that was!'

'Somebody wanted some milk and asked old Bill to get it for him—what was it he asked her?'

'Ar, what was it?' asked fatty on the floor, so the third man helped them out.

'He said "Got any lait, ma?"' he said.

'Did he get any?' piped up the tubby one, but no one bothered to answer him.

'Remember that china of his?'

'What, the bloke with the hair?'

'Yeh, that's 'im.'

'He was a bloody lad, he was.'

'Yeh, he was that. I knew him in Blighty—at Bradford. He used to go to the Dogs a lot. Old Bill never wanted to go with him, but this bloke—Tommy was his name, Tommy Butt—always made him go. Gawd, what a bloke! Old Tommy could talk his grandma out her pension. Talk? Never 'eard a chap talk like him!'

Fatty chirped again from the floor. 'What was that you was telling old Ben the other day?'

'What, when old Bill wanted to go to the football match that Saturday?'

'Yeh, I think that was it.'

'Bloody scream that was. Larf? Gawd, I could 'ave larfed me —— head off.'

The baby whimpered a little as the truck banged through another pit in the road. Everybody straightened themselves out, and the man went on with his yarn.

'I follered him up that Saturday. We 'adn't been in

the Army long. Tommy and Bill used to go everywhere together, and Tommy always wanted to go to the Dogs, and so Bill 'ad to go with him. This Saturday old Bill was telling Tommy they hadn't got enough money for the Dogs. "We're always broke by Monday when we go to the Dogs," says Bill. Anyway, Tommy, he wasn't having any. He says, "Bill, we've always been mates, 'avent we? All right then, we always go to the Dogs, don't we? You can trust me, yer pal, carn't yer? I've got a couple of dead certs for this arternoon." They stood there outside the Dogs, arguing away and old Bill was tryin' to drag Tommy off. "No, Bill," says Tommy, "you're comin' to the Dogs—how much 'ave you got?" Gawd, it was a larf.'

A queer little moaning noise came from the corner of the truck but no one took any notice of it, and the man went on about Tommy and Bill.

'I didn't see them again until they came out of the Dogs, and old Bill was grouching away because Tommy had bet all their money on a stoomer, a tyke that wasn't worth the grub they fed it on. So seein' as they had nothing else to do and only a few coppers left, they bought a paper and went into the football match. Reading the paper in there, Bill sees he has had some luck. A bob he 'ad put on a horse that morning 'as won the 2.30 at Manchester at 10-1. Mind you, I 'ad gone inter the Dogs meself and didn't know about this win of Bill's till I seed them comin' back into the Dogs, looking for me. "Hi, mate," says Tommy to me. "Bill's won ten bob. Can you let him 'ave ten bob on the strength of it? I've got a dog what's home and dried for the last race. Carn't lose," and Tommy had taken the half quid I was getting out before Bill got a smell of it. Then he makes off for the nearest bookie with Bill tailin' on behind, pleading with him that this dog ain't no good, and if he must bet their only ten bob, why not try Samson, which is a real dog.'

One of the Frenchmen tapped George on the knee,

which made him jump because he could not see him. The Frenchman wanted a match for his pipe and asked him in quite good English. George gave him a Swan out of his box and tried to take in everything at once in the sudden glare of the match. The scene was bizarre and even crazy : a sprawling group of civilians in various stages of fatigue and obviously hungry. Two soldiers, looking more like miners, perching on the side of the truck with their backs against the canopy. A red-faced, scanty-haired soldier sitting in the middle of the floor, like a nasty, fat, selfish boy monopolizing all his toys. The fat soldier struggled up with surprising agility and pushed himself over towards the lighted match and lit half a cigarette from it. Then the other two soldiers lit half-smoked cigarettes from his. They had all needed a smoke but had imagined no one had a match.

The baby was asleep, its dark little head, like a dried nut, lolling and nodding over the arm of its listless mother.

The match was out. The only light a faint square glimmer above the tail-board, and the red glows of cigarettes that moved about erratically as if by their own volition.

The truck lurched and flung itself along the road, heading towards no one cared where, providing it was away from the bombardment.

‘Well,’ said the soldier, drawing hard on his tab-end, ‘that dog what Tommy bet on lost and Samson won it. I saw ’em outside again and they touched me for another half-dollar for their tea, and I didn’t see them again till late that night when I was on my way back to the camp.’

‘Proper stooge, was old Bill,’ squeaked the fat man, who had always to keep a spoke in a yarn.

‘Stooge?’ said the soldier. ‘Stooge wasn’t in it with Bill. Anyway, as I was sayin’, I saw ’em again that night. I ’eard a voice in a shop doorway and I seed Tommy Butt there eatin’ fish and chips with some skirt. I just said get up them stairs and went on, and then I seed old Bill waitin’ on the corner and he ’ad a face as

long as a bleedin' fiddle and I asked what was up. He said it was his ring what was up—right up at Uncle's. Tommy 'ad persuaded him to pawn his ring for somethin' to last 'em through the week. They got ten bob for the ring. Then they met a girl of Bill's and Tommy said he would take her off Bill's hands doin' him a good favour, seein' as they were pals like. But he gave Bill a bob so he could go to the pictures out of the ten bob they 'ad got on the ring, and then Tommy took this dame off to a dance.'

'Old Bill he then went back up to this here shop doorway and I 'eard him talking into it with Tommy, and then Tommy come out and I sees him pattin' Bill on the shoulder and the last I 'eard Bill say was, "Look, Tommy, you gotter come along now. Its' getting late and we'll be marked out." Old Tommy was still pattin' him on the shoulder and sayin', "Bill, do I ever ask you to do much for me. Ain't we always bin' mates. Another five minutes and I'll be along. I'm only askin' you to wait down the road five minutes—as a pal—I'm just askin' yer. . . ." Larff? I nearly split me bleedin' sides.'

And the soldier laughed so much he nearly fell off the side of the truck on to the floor.

The truck swung into a large gateway and pulled up suddenly, shaking everybody into greater realization of how cramped and stiff they all were. There was a rattling of chains and the tail-board fell down. The Captain's foghorn voice disturbed the still, night air. 'Come on, all off here.'

'Bloodyell, we're there,' said one of the soldiers.

'Where?' asked the fat one, but no one knew.

The French were suddenly all talking at once. Three of them sounded very annoyed about something, as if they had been awakened out of a good sleep.

The men got down first and then took the children from the women. The children were stiff with fatigue. They stood down by the vehicle too tired even to rub their eyes and wonder where they were. In fact, they



just stood. Long ago they had given up wondering about anything.

There was a 'crump-crump' going on in the distance and the horizon sky sporadically showed flashes of light which momentarily revealed the lined and dirty faces of the refugees.

A heavily built man came out of a large house closely followed by three young men in black berets. They fell on the little group of civilians and excitedly rattled away at them between gestures guiding them over to the house.

The three soldiers were already walking out of the gate and George heard them say:

'Where the 'ell's this?'

'I know where we are.'

'I'll bet you bloody well do!'

'Where we want is down this road.'

'I 'ope so. 'Ard lines on them kids, ain't it?'

'What, them kids in there?'

'Yeh.'

'Yeh, it's pretty tough, pore little ——. Somethink like London in the Blitz. Come on, Tubby, where the 'ell are you?'

George lit one of his cigarettes and waited while the Captain gave the driver some instructions. The baby's voice could be heard harsh and shrill, as an old woman's in agony. The man with the empty coat-sleeve was moaning to himself whilst being guided over to the house by a young man in a beret. One small girl was half lying on the grass by the side of the drive where somebody had just put her down.

George had not noticed her at the beginning of the journey, and as the sky was illuminated once more with gunfire, he saw something else. She had no hands. Her skinny little arms terminated just above the wrists in dirty and ragged bandages.

There was another flash in the sky, this time a flare from a plane. And as he stared at her thin, doll-like face, she smiled up at him. . . .

ROGER ANSCOMBE

THE HOURS OF DARKNESS

'WEREN'T we supposed to meet the local escort to-day?' I said. 'Three days from home—it's about time we saw them, isn't it?'

I was sitting in the third mate's room before turning in. He had a long, freckled face and was always at ease, for which I envied him. He said: 'Sparky, if you're looking forward to seeing escorts you're going to be disappointed. How do you imagine they'd find us in this weather, eh?'

'They've got D.F.,' I said.

'And us break radio silence? The subs would thank us for being so kind, you ought to know that. Well, now you'll have to D.F. yourself out of here because it's quarter to eight and I'm going to sit in the dark and get my eyes ready for the bridge.' He had already switched off the light.

'Good night, Stan,' I said.

'Night, Sparky.'

I lay in my bunk in the dark and heard the creaking of the wood panelling in the alleyway opposite my door as the ship soared and plunged into abyss after abyss and everything shook and trembled from the propeller blades clawing at the water. If I pressed my ear to the bulkhead I could hear the dull plodding of the engines. They would nearly stop as the ship rose to a sea; as she slid down the other side they'd burst into a racing clatter. The wind moaned and shrilled in the little ventilator in the deckhead above me and I thought of the wild, black night outside. I wondered what would happen if a U-boat found us. *They can't torpedo you in really rough weather. There's nothing they like so much as a spot of bad weather. They can't chase you,*

*of course, but if they happen to be lying in wait . . .* People said all sorts of things. I didn't know which was true.

'I shan't sleep much to-night,' I told myself. I jumped as a violent thud resounded through the ship's hull. It was a sea catching her fair and square, that was all, but I didn't know; one could never be sure. 'I shall not sleep,' I thought. 'I must be awake if anything happens. Suppose they didn't call me. Suppose I didn't wake up in time.'

But I did fall asleep. The next thing was the quartermaster, a huge, alarming fellow with a face like a skull, shining his torch on me and saying in his sepulchral voice: 'Quarter to two. Quarter to two . . .' He disappeared, switching on the light as he closed the door.

It's better, I thought, pulling on my shoes. The sea is smoother. The wind is going down. She isn't pitching half so much. I began to hum a dance tune as I tied the laces. The ship lurched and I fell into a half-sitting position on the floor. Things rumbled inside the cupboard. My shaving tackle fell with a crash into the wash-basin. The alarm clock swung out on its string from the hook above my bunk. The weather, I realised, was no better.

As I crossed the boat-deck on my way up to the wireless-room I could hear the sound of water rushing and swashing everywhere. The wind thundered in my ears and blew the hair in my eyes. I held on to a ventilator and tried to see through the darkness. For a few seconds the steely crescent of the waning moon showed through a gash in the clouds and I thought I could make out the shape of one of the other ships. I heard the clap and rush of a falling wave-crest; the ship reared up and a monstrous hissing sea swept beneath us; then she plunged down the valley behind and all around was water that towered and threatened. I waited for a lull in the seas and made a dash for the companion ladder.

Alone in the wireless-room after my chief had gone, I felt cold and uneasy. The cotton-wool of sleep had left me now. The chief had gathered up his pipe and pouch and box of matches and stuffed them into his pocket. 'Nothing much doing,' he'd said. 'I'm sorry for any poor devils that get it to-night. Don't forget to change over the batteries at five o'clock. Good night.'

I had the 'phones over one ear only, so that I could hear anything that happened. I didn't feel so cut off like that. The atmospherics were bad, a continuous crackling and crashing. There were no signals except the British coast stations occasionally saying that they had no messages for any ships, and Spanish and Portuguese ones faintly working. I knew there were hundreds of British ships all over the ocean hearing the same signals. Listening, but making no sound. For a moment I was cheered to think of this silent comradeship, then my nerves tingled and the skin on my face went tight as the ship staggered under a heavy blow, stopped almost dead, and slewed sideways. But the lights did not go out and there were no shouts or alarm bells, and when I felt the vibrations of the propeller I breathed easily again.

The quartermaster came in with a tiny pot of newly-brewed tea. His dripping oilskins left a pool on the floor.

'Not very nice weather,' I said, taking the teapot and jamming it between the direction-finder and the emergency transmitter.

'Cor, Sparks, it's something terrible out there. I spilt half your tea on me way up.'

'How's the wind?' I asked.

'Blowin' like the hammers of hell. We're flooded out aft. Chippy'll have some work to do to-morrow. The second mate couldn't get out of his room for twenty minutes; his blackout porch is all bashed in.'

'There were gaps in the clouds when I came on watch,' I said.

‘That may be—the wind’s gone round a couple of points. It’ll blow harder before this lot’s finished, you see if it don’t. Cor, hell, I’d hate to be at sea on a night like this.’

When he had gone I felt more anxious than ever. The wind veering quickly and the sea getting vicious. I knew that meant the centre of the storm must be quite close. It must be overtaking us, I thought.

‘Why, now, of all times?’ I asked futilely. ‘Why now? Why on God’s earth now? Because we’re not on God’s earth; we’re on His hateful sea, that’s why. The storm is travelling west to east, with us, and this will go on for days and days. We’re going straight into the submarine area. We’ve no escorts, not even a trawler. Only a great fat passenger liner, and what can that do against submarines?’

It seemed like the plan of fate. I’d been born in a great house and been ill and had operations and grown strong and gone to school and learnt useless things and grown up and had love affairs and failures and triumphs and begun to understand what living was all about—for the sake of this. It all converged *here*, if only I had known. A nightmare sensation enveloped me. I wanted to run. I wanted the ship to run. And I knew I could not escape because it was reality and would go on and on and on. I murmured miserable, incoherent things as the ship staggered and plunged and the teapot slid out across the table, as helpless as myself.

I was eating the last sandwich when I heard the signal of a ship in distress.

SSSS . . . SSSS . . . SSSS . . .

My fingers gripped the pencil hard as I took down the message.

SSSS . . . SSSS . . . SSSS . . . *Submarine following me. . . .*

He stumbled over the figures and I could not read his position at first. I waited until almost immediately a Scottish coast station acknowledged the message and

repeated it in clear confident Morse. I wrote it out on a form and sent it up to the bridge.

A few minutes later the bridge voice-pipe whistled.

'Yes?' I said.

'How long ago did you get that message?' It was the second mate's voice. I didn't like the second mate much, nor his implication, but the sound of any voice did me good just then.

'About ten minutes ago. It says the time on the form, you know.'

'I know, but I left it in the chart-room. I forgot to look Ten minutes ago, eh?

'Why?' I asked apprehensively.

'It's right ahead of us, that's all. We shan't be up to it until late to-morrow. You've not told anyone about this, have you?'

'Of course not.'

'Well, don't. You'll have them all seeing subs and getting in panics, and it's not fair on the engineers, see?'

I felt annoyed with him. Even if this was my first trip, I had got a little commonsense.

'I'll send up any further details,' I said, and replaced the stopper.

I sat down in the chair again. I adjusted the tuning of the receiver. I was thinking about that other ship and trying to imagine the U-boat. It must be on the surface and very close or they would never have seen it. They will be turning away, trying to put it behind them. Then it will come creeping up, getting ahead, manœuvring into position, waiting for the right moment. . . . I pictured the sudden flash and explosion. I pictured them trying to abandon ship, the wind blowing like a wall, the sea roaring and surging; the ship listing over and slowly righting itself, then throwing its bow in the air and sliding back into the sea; the water closing over them; bits of wood floating; bodies.

I sat shivering, cursing each howl of the gale. -I swore at the sea and the ship and myself and God and the



complacent men who made weather charts with arrows that showed winds that were lies. I cursed the people on land in their safe houses; it was nothing to me that their houses were bombed, houses don't sink when they are bombed. I hated them. I hated everything secure and everything insecure, and, most of all, myself. I fell silent. There was nothing for me to do but sit there, listening, afraid.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quite suddenly the sea and the wallowing ship were far removed. A vast peacefulness welled up inside me and everything became soft and gentle. For no reason I was filled with happiness. Here was I! On a well-found ship boldly defying a storm in the winter North Atlantic; lifting, falling, rising up proudly. The waves, what waves there might be, were meant for her and she enjoyed them. This was indeed the triumph of man. More than that, it was the triumph of mankind, in whom I had passionate faith, and I was a part of mankind! The men on the bridge, it was exactly the same with them, only up there it was cold and wet and they couldn't talk because of the wind. And the engineers down below. And the firemen. And the people in their bunks asleep. But they didn't know it, none of them knew it, the mates nor the engineers, nor the firemen, nor anybody. I was the only one who knew it, and I was the only one who knew the immensity of it.

I smiled. I laughed softly, to think that I had not known it before. How funny, I thought, how incredibly funny!

I began to think of the world. I thought of everything, all the things, the big and the little. I thought of summer haystacks and the white silence of a golf-ball nestling under ferns, and railway lines in the rain; the crunch of cartwheels on gravel and the jolt of their axles, the keen green and yellow of daffodils, the plush strokes of a drawing-room clock at three on a Sunday

afternoon ; of the glint of a needle in a hearth-rug ; the grandeur of movement of clouds past mountains.

And London. The London I'd lived in and hated and loved and drunk beer in on Saturday nights. London with the silver balloons floating up there amongst the white clouds in the moonlight as I walked home. London with the underground trains, bright red and warm, full of people in the morning, fresh-smelling of shaving soap, holding folded newspapers ; full of different people in the evenings, going home, going to shows and dances and meetings. London with the trolley-buses' trolleys coming off the wire at the bottom of Grays Inn Road. London with its life and meetings and demonstrations ; Aid for Spain ; Trafalgar Square ; mounted police ; dustbin lids. London with the tall girl in the inverted lampshade hat, whom I met each morning, to whom I was always going to speak but never did.

I did not think of these things. I became part of them, and they part of me, and all the while the wind must have been slowly dying.

At eight o'clock my chief came up to relieve me with his grunted 'Morning' and I went down to wash and shave before breakfast.

Outside was a brilliant sunrise. I still had to steady myself by the ventilator because of the swell, but the sea had gone down and there was no wind. The smoke from the funnel was rising straight up into the blue sky.

I looked at the ships in the dazzling red sunlight. They were not all where they should have been and some were miles away on the horizon. Two or three were quite close to us. They were clear-cut in the sun's rays, clean and fresh.

It was spring—spring in the North Atlantic in November in 1940. The sea like rolling green hills, the soft, warm air, the ships fresh and brilliant in the sunshine, it made me want to sing.

I wished there was someone I could share it with.

'The ships should have leaves on them,' I wanted to say, 'masses of young green leaves.'

## K. B. POOLE

### DEAR TIME'S WASTE

I STILL felt weak and ill the day I was discharged from the isolated Field Hospital. I had been there three weeks, during which time more and more cases of malaria had been brought in until it became a priority disease.

I stood outside the office, my small kit and bed-roll beside me, waiting for my discharge. After an hour had passed I heard my name called, and I went up the three wooden steps of the truck to where an orderly sat at a desk covered with papers.

'You're Barrett, ain't yer?'

'That's right,' I said.

'I 'ad your dis., but God knows what I've done wiv it.' He scrabbled about amongst the papers, creating an even worse confusion. 'Ah, 'ere it is; number 11262616.'

'That's not me,' I said.

''Course it bloody well is. Name's Barrett, ain't it?'

'That's right.'

'Initials A. G.'

'Mine are B. T.,' I said quietly.

He squinted up at me challengingly, consciously supported by the authority of the two white stripes conspicuous on his khaki shirt. 'Oh,' he said, then blusteringly, 'Well, it must be another one.' Finally he found it and gave it to me. 'Report 25th Transit Camp to rejoin your unit.'

'Any transport laid on?' I asked.

'Transport? 'Ere, what yer fink this place is, a bloody Maintenance Depôt? Yer 'itch-'ike, same as the rest.' He shouted out the next name.

I went out into the hot sunlight, picked up my bed-roll and kit and reached the gate leading to the main road, a smooth, beaten strip of sand along which lorries passed, raising clouds of sand and dust.

'Any idea where the 25th Transit Camp is?' I asked a figure at the gate, a figure with a face like a clown's under its streaks of white sand.

'About forty miles up the road, then left out of Sousse. A bit off the road, though.'

'Thanks,' I said, at that moment jerking my thumb at a passing 3-tonner. The lorry pulled up with a jerk and grind of brakes.

'Where going, chum?'

'Sousse. Going near there?'

'Bout half-way. Get in. I'll drop you off.'

I lifted the heavy canvas flap, flung my kit in and clambered up the high iron duckboard, staggering on the solid iron seat as the lorry started off. It banged and slammed its way along the track, swaying from side to side, lurching along under a heavy cloud of sand that flung itself into the lorry, swirling on the floor, in my eyes and hair. It was impossible to sit on the seat; every jolt struck the base of my spine and made my teeth chatter. I tried sitting on the backs of my hands, but I had nothing to grip with. Finally I sat on my bed-roll.

Once again I became vividly aware of the complete loss of my identity. I was unconscious of any emotion, any feeling, any passion; was cloaked only with a dumb, unreasoning apathy. I had been leading this existence so long now, had banged my way in trucks across thousands of miles. Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Libya, Africa. An endless reel of silent film that had no beginning, no sequence, no end. They had been experiences forced upon me by army life, controlled by orders from remote authority; and because I had sought none of them they had no meaning, no interest, no emotion.

I remembered as a child poring over maps and being thrilled by the names of towns and coloured countries, making up my mind that one day I should see them. Well, I had, and it had meant nothing at all. There had been the animal-like existence on the troopship; the revolting proximity of flesh and uniform; the blasphemy and foulness; the endless talk of sex; the obscene, mirthless songs sung without feeling; the sullen attitude towards the authority of young and inexperienced officers who lived in splendid isolation and comfort whilst twelve thousand men lived like pigs below the water-line.

The inconsequential reel was vividly broken by singular and splendid friendships, by a great aching loneliness of mind and spirit when no mail came, and even when it came; by long, good talks in the desert under a brilliant, timeless moon that suffused the sand to a deep violet in a silence that could be heard. Mallarmé and Baudelaire with Jack, Catullus and Virgil with Geoffrey, Chaucer with Mac, and his impassioned reading of *Tam o' Shanter* after two water-bottles of sour red wine. There had been these things, oases in a limitless desert of sand and unreality and curious withdrawal from the full and natural spate of contact and emotion. These would have been precious, immemorial moments over a bottle of wine in one's own home, or the home of a friend. It had been as if ghosts had gathered and talked. We had not really seen each other, or had we?

The existence had been ordered to a vague, symbolistic pattern of khaki and braces, open meat-cans lying in piles to mark a camp, any camp; camouflaged lorries, brew-cans, 'bivvies' that went up and came down without any association with its immediate surroundings. You went for your mail to the Section Office that was always in the same position after weeks of travelling, for you formed up in a letter L pattern. An enormous unseen hand lifted up the camp and flung it down again twenty, fifty, a hundred miles ahead, in a day or a week.

The cookhouse was always there with its unaltering stew or bully beef, its tins and tables black with a moving horde of flies, that swarmed into your food and tea and drove you near to murder ; its swill pit lined with rows of countless opened tins. You lined up for your food under a burning sky, the sun beating down upon your head and body. You ate without any appetite at all, washed your mess-tins in grease-clotted water and went back, carrying your tea until it cooled, scooping off the flies with a spoon before you drank. You never saw women, you had uncontrollable sexual desires which when they reached anywhere men would release in a sharp, vicious orgy of debauch, careless of disease, completely indifferent to shapes of breasts or thighs so long as they were satisfied, and go on to a place where they could drink and forget ; though one never forgot because one never remembered.

Once a mobile cinema had been announced and all available trucks, packed with standing soldiers, had gone off on the forty-mile run. The title of the film had not been announced, and there was much conjecture from men who had not seen a film for months, careless if it were old if it had music, and dancing, and women. In the midst of the limitless waste of sand two lorries were standing back to back, a screen unrolled down the sides ; music, gay music drifted across, and men were singing and whistling under a great canopy of smoke from thousands of cigarettes. In the rapidly falling darkness the lighted ends of cigarettes weaved brilliant kaleidoscopic patterns of colour like flak, like millions of fire-flies ; and the pall of smoke hung poised above them in the still, breathless air, obscuring the screen.

The music broke down and whistles and catcalls shrilled out from the huddled waiting men who had done two thousand miles of hell from El Alamein to Tunis. The music began again, broke down ; an officer asked the men to sit down so that all could see, his voice smothered by a collective courage of shouts, blasphemy,



whistling. I took my position at the back, knowing before the film came on that I should see nothing, trapped, as always, amongst released humanity, amongst uniforms and sweating bodies and disconnected talk.

' Might be 'Eddy la Marr. . . . Yeah, that was a woman; 'ad 'er in a gharry. . . . No, Sister Street, number seven—the old woman never wrote after that. . . . Say we're goin' 'ome after the next push. . . . He's a bastard, but I'll effing well get him . . . what about a nice drop of Stella off the ice? . . . I couldn't 'arf do a steak.'

The music began again, a popular song taken up in a great roar by thousands of voices and whistles, whole bars behind the singer and out of tune. The music changed suddenly as the film began, leaving all those voices suddenly isolated, disembodied, almost cruelly abandoned. Bodies swayed to and fro, raising themselves on tiptoe, jostling for positions they could only maintain a few minutes before they sought others. 'Desert Victory,' I heard; then a great inhuman howl went up from those throats. There was no doubting that note; it burned with anger and frustration from men who had come miles to see women and hear music. The echoing, dramatic voice of the commentator was swamped by yells and shouts, the packed masses began to disintegrate, cursing and blaspheming; disorder came on them suddenly as they broke for the lines of lorries parked nearby.

The low, angry roar seemed like the beating of a great sea in hollow caves. Gears ground in, horns took up an unearthly symphony of discord, lorries started up, and I caught snatches of film flicking over, disconnected, removed from its commentator's voice, now no longer audible. The two hours passed. I saw nothing, heard only gunfire from the sound apparatus. I stared at the sky glittering with stars, Saturn burning fiercely, the Plough flashing with brilliant vibration, silent witnesses to the disillusioned thousands who had

come and now were going, angry and bitter, to the lines of lorries.

The lorry pulled up with a jerk, flinging me on my back.

'Ere y'are, chum. You've 'ad it.'

'Thanks,' I yelled, and flinging my things out, I followed, watching my lorry turn off across the sand, and seeing the long, empty stretch of desert track ahead and behind me, like a great void.

I felt slightly dizzy from the journey and the fierce, pitiless sun glinting and flashing on the hot white sand. The flies appeared from nowhere, diving in at me, settling on me, tormenting me as I vainly flailed my arms, perspiration pouring from me with the effort. A fierce hot wind blew across the desert like the blast from a furnace door, and I noticed a long, dark, funnel-shaped cloud poised in the distance. I got up, jerking my thumb at an oncoming lorry. It passed with a great whirl of sand that stung my face and forced me to close my eyes so that I missed two more. Presently a 15 cwt. pulled up.

'Sousse?' I queried.

'A mile this side,' answered the driver. 'Drop you off at the ration dump.'

I climbed in the back, trying to find a place among the stacked Jerricans. 'O.K.,' I yelled, hanging on as the truck moved off. I sat miserably down on the cans, shifting my bottom from one side to the other as the truck bumped swiftly over the track. A heavy lurch as it struck a pothole sent me up in the air, striking my head against the iron bar supporting the canvas. I swore bitterly, trying to steady myself on the jarring, clanging cans. The sand came in with great gusts, making me choke. I could see nothing but metal cans and canvas. I began to feel sick.

After about five miles the truck halted and I heard a threatening voice shout 'Yallah!' I stood up and peered round the truck, watching an Arab vainly trying

to move out of the way. He was mounted high up on a donkey, perched astride the two enormous panniers of dates on either side of the stubborn beast. The Arab was jerking cruelly at the bridle, cursing in a swift, guttural, harsh voice, his naked feet beating like drumsticks on the animal's flanks. 'Iggri. Yer brown bastard! Yallah!' shouted the driver; then, putting his foot on the accelerator he reversed slightly, changed gear and jerked forward, the side of his truck deliberately hitting the offside pannier.

It tipped up, the donkey's feet lost their balance and he fell sideways, flinging the Arab from his insecure perch. Dates thudded like rain in the sand and a furious spluttering Arab cursed us in a high, urgent voice, charged with venom and anger. He cursed and cursed, shaking his fists, tearing at his galabieh. I heard the driver laugh, and in a swirl of sand the truck moved off. After what seemed an eternity he pulled up again.

'Sorry, Jack, as far as I go. Where do you want?'

I told him.

'New one on me. They're all bloody awful, anyway. It's about a mile to Sousse, that's all I know. Cheerio.'

I began to walk, hoping another truck would come. I could see glinting white buildings far away which must, I thought, be Sousse. The cloud at the back had swollen to an immense size and the hot wind scorched my face and neck. After ten minutes' trudging I gave in, flinging myself down in the sand. A jeep came and I hailed it. An officer leaned out.

'Only as far as Sousse, if that's any good to you.'

I thanked him and got in. As we sped along the hot air seemed to burn me up. I shut my eyes, holding my handkerchief over my mouth, clinging on to the swaying jeep. We pulled up suddenly, and opening astonished eyes, I saw white houses.

'Where are you going?' asked the officer.

I told him.

'I'm afraid you've beaten me,' he said kindly. 'There's

an M.P. about a quarter of a mile down the road. I should ask him.'

I thanked him and stood back on the pavement in front of two white houses marked TYPHUS in large black letters of warning. Arabs shuffled silently along the road or squatted by the walls and doorways of bombed houses. Women passed, only their glinting black eyes visible above their yashmaks, tall, heavy water gourds poised on their graceful heads. I passed stalls of fruit, my mouth watering, yet fearful of buying grapes coated like chocolate with flies. Half-cut canteloupes lay on the ground, their black seeds indistinguishable from the flies settled on the pink succulent fruit.

There were soldiers everywhere, slouching aimlessly about or purposefully seeking the brothels. I found the M.P. at the crossroads, and he directed me to the transit camp about two miles along the road, even getting me a lift from a passing truck, which dropped me at the camp. An R.P. carrying a stick asked me where I was from, and I told him.

'God help you, chum. Of all the bloody places in Africa, this is the bloodiest, and, believe me, I've been in a few. You walk miles in a day. You'll have to book in first; that's straight up here. A mile left of that is the cookhouse, and half a mile beyond that the bogs. There's a NAAFI about a mile the other way, but it's always sold out.'

By now I was feeling the effects of heat and hunger and sickness, but I set out along the track, shifting my bedroll from one arm to the other, the sweat stickily closing my eyes and running in channels between my shoulder blades. Finally I reached a tent with a notice in the sand: OFFICE.

I dropped my kit and went into the dark, hot tent. For a few minutes I could see nothing, hear nothing but the low symphonic hum of flies, then gradually I noticed a camp table, wooden box seats and a white mosquito net draped over a bed. I waited five minutes,

then coughed. A drowsy, irritable voice came from under the net.

'Who's there?'

I gave my name and number.

'Never heard of it.'

'Just reporting from 119 Field Hospital.'

'Report back at three o'clock. Had a meal?'

'No.'

'Report to the cookhouse.'

I went out disconsolately and stood gazing at three separate tracks leading in three different directions, unable to decide which one to take. I went back into the tent and asked. There was no sound; whoever it was had gone to sleep. Wearily, indifferently, I trudged along one, and after about half a mile I saw a big notice: LATRINES. A soldier came out, and I asked him first the time and then the direction of the cookhouse.

'It's a mile back beyond the office tent, and in any case you've had it. It's two o'clock now; tiffin is from twelve to one.'

I looked round for some semblance of shade, but there was not a tree visible for miles, only a great expanse of burning white sand under a molten, pitiless sun. A weaving dance of flies was taking place above my head, driving me near to madness. How the day passed I do not remember. I reported here, reported there, reported back again, and was told to report three times a day until a ship was ready, for my unit had crossed to Sicily. At the sound of this name my heart leaped. Sicily. Europe. No more the hot hell of Africa, no more sand. There would be green trees, houses, women, people.

I walked the mile to the cookhouse and the mile back three times a day. I lined up in an endless queue of men for each meal, sitting in the burning sand to eat, hearing stories from men who were patiently waiting for ships that never came. It was as if thousands of men were marooned on one lonely desert island, waiting,



waiting for ships that never came. A few had tents to sleep in, the rest slept out. I found a small oasis in that limitless space where there were six scattered olive trees, and I laid my blanket and kit down to stake my claim.

All day as the burning sun wheeled slowly round the five other soldiers and myself moved round the tree, each frantically seeking the maximum inadequate shelter from the brittle, dry, sand-covered leaves. Large black, vicious ants got at us, up our trousers, under our ground-sheets; millions of flies tormented and tortured us from dawn to sunset. I waited anxiously for the evenings, the sweet, fresh coolness of the desert evenings, before the cold set in and I huddled up miserably under one blanket waiting for the warmth I knew I feared and hated.

In the evenings I would drag down to the sea, a mile and a half from the camp, to bathe in warm, tepid water and emerge unrefreshed as if from a hot bath. Far to the right I could see a long line of bomb-smashed docks, skeletons of cranes and hoists, and the funnels of ships. Far out to sea stood a large grey ship, an aeroplane circling in wide sweeps above it, then it became a speck and vanished. I felt as if I were indeed shipwrecked between lost worlds of limitless sea and sky. After the fifth day I gave up going, went to the cookhouse only for my breakfast, dreading the weary trudge under the merciless sun.

There were parades every morning and men detailed for fatigues, but I never went. Once I saw my name on orders under DISCIPLINE, commanding me to report to the office at once, but I never went. The hours and days and nights became for me a measureless sequence of time. I had no feelings, no sensations, no emotions, not even anger as I stared up at the ragged canopy of olive leaves above my head, through which slanted sharp spears of sunlight. My head seemed like a leaden ball and my whole body ached. It grew worse



and worse, and on the eighth day I reported to the M.O. He took one shrewd look at me, asking me a few particulars. Then tersely, 'Get your kit and report here in half an hour. You've had a bad go of jaundice and malaria.'

Somehow I got my things and crawled my way back. After an hour I saw an ambulance arrive and two stretcher cases were lifted in. I was told to get in as well and the ambulance moved smoothly away. I must have dozed or fainted, I do not know which, but I woke as the ambulance door opened and I was told to get out. I was back at the Field Hospital from whence I had started, it seemed, years and years ago. I saw it with complete and inexpressible indifference—the sand, the sun, the tents, the bright red crosses, the ambulances.

'Hoy, you! Get weaving! You're blocking the gangway.'

Instinctively controlled and governed by the voice, I moved forward, not knowing how nor caring where.

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